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OUR HOUSE OF COMMONS

OUR HOUSE OF COMMONS

ITS

REALITIES AND ROMANCE

BY

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AUTHOR OF 'TO MODDER RIVER WITH METHUEN,'
'THREE MONTHS OF HOME RULE,' ETC.

SECOND EDITION, EXTENDED

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N O T E.

THIS volume is not a concordance of parliamentary practice nor a statistical chart of the late elections.

It deals with a great workshop and a now greater Society resort.

Judged by or compared with its predecessors, the popular Chamber is to-day essentially and in every sense a New House of Commons.

It is the first House of the Twentieth Century, the precursor of that which, under the influence of Imperial Federation, will become also the first Representative Chamber of our great Colonial Empire, and in which the New Zealander may yet take his seat.

It is also the New House of Commons to those members of Parliament who are enabled by the late elections, for the first time, to sit in this historic Assembly.

To these I respectfully dedicate my volume.

CONTENTS.

BOOK I.

THE SERIOUS SIDE OF PARLIAMENT.

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	THE OLD HOUSE AND THE NEW	3
II.	HOW TO MAKE A LEGISLATOR — HOW TO REACH THE WOOLSACK — HOW TO BECOME PREMIER	6
III.	WHAT M.P.-SHIP MEANS	10
IV.	THE POLITICIAN'S BIBLE	14
V.	AN M.P.'S DAY	19
VI.	THINGS TO BE REMEMBERED	23
VII.	THE HOUSE CONSIDERED AS A FRIEND, OR THE PEN- ALTY OF BEING DULL	26
VIII.	SOME LESSONS IN THE FAILURE AND THE TRIUMPH OF AMBITION	29
IX.	REALITIES OF AMBITION	35
X.	FORMING A MINISTRY	39
XI.	THE GREAT OFFICES OF STATE	44
XII.	THE COST OF M.P.-SHIP	49
XIII.	THE TREASURY BENCH	56
XIV.	THE M.P.'S WATCHWORD	61

XV. THE EX-M.P.	65
XVI. THE TRUE INWARDNESS OF THE M.P.	70
XVII. THE OFFICE OF MR SPEAKER	73
XVIII. HARD-LUCK	82
XIX. HOW M.P.'S ARE "WHIPPED"	87
XX. THE LOBBY	96
XXI. QUAIN'T TRIVIALITIES	108

BOOK II.

THE LIGHT SIDE OF PARLIAMENT.

XXII. LOOKING BACK	115
XXIII. GETTING A BILL THROUGH!	126
XXIV. THE FINANCIER IN POLITICS	131
XXV. THE GAIETIES OF IT	136
XXVI. CONCERNING PAIRS AND PAIRING	143
XXVII. DINING AT THE HOUSE	148
XXVIII. ON THE OPENING OF PARLIAMENT AND ITS HUMOURS	159
XXIX. THE PLEASURES OF THE HOUSE—"THE TERRACE"	167
XXX. THE HOUSE AS A WONDERLAND	176
XXXI. SOME "OLD PARLIAMENTARY HANDS"	180
XXXII. WHEN HAROURT LED	186
XXXIII. THE LADIES' GALLERY	193
XXXIV. CONCERNING THE PRIVATE LIVES OF THE GREAT	201
XXXV. CONCERNING THE SPEAKER'S HOSPITALITIES	207
XXXVI. SOME PARLIAMENTARY DANDIES	214
XXXVII. THE DUKE OF RUTLAND AS POET AND DANDY	218
XXXVIII. THE PLEASURES OF POLITICAL INSOLENCE	222

XXXIX. HOUSE OF COMMONS MARRIAGES ; OR, THE PROFITS OF MATRIMONY	227
XL. THE M.P.'S WIFE	233
XLI. THE TORIES AS LIGHT CAVALRY	241
XLII. THE MEASURES OF PROROGATION	245
XLIII. THE REAL LORD SALISBURY	252
XLIV. THE GENTLE LIFE OF MR BALFOUR	258
XLV. MR CHAMBERLAIN	265
XLVI. ANOTHER TYPICAL CLASSMAN	271
XLVII. MR TIMOTHY HEALY	277
XLVIII. A PALADIN OF THE TURF	279
XLIX. MR DILLON	281
L. LORD JAMES OF HEREFORD	283
LI. THE PARLIAMENTARY LAWYER	286
LII. JOHN BURNS	291
LIII. THE FIRST PARLIAMENT OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY	294
LIV. CONCLUSION	299

BOOK I.

THE SERIOUS SIDE OF PARLIAMENT

CHAPTER I.

THE OLD HOUSE AND THE NEW.

THE following pages have been written to show how the real House of Commons differs from the supposed.

They will, it is hoped, show the new envoy to St Stephen's a little of the life that is before him, and how it should be lived, or how under the pressure of custom it will be lived.

They will show also how extremes may meet in the austerities and pleasures of legislation.

The House of Commons may be dull, but it is not habitually serious.

It has a strong social side to its character which is not generally suspected, and is delightful when realised.

Once known as the finest club in Europe, it has become of late a society lounge, with its recognised place in the engagement tablets of our ladies of quality.

Its Terrace in June and July constitutes what is known euphemistically as a "function."

Its dinners are the most popular of the West End.

As the author presents the House of Commons to his readers so does it exist. It is the House of to-day, not of the past. It is the House of our own times only.

The Library of the British Museum does not exist in his pages. The author has lived in the four corners of his recorded experiences. It is with the versatile House of Commons of the new century that he deals.

Once the slave of its own rules, it is now pleasantly engaged in fashioning and cementing new traditions. The work seems promising, too.

All the men you meet in the lobby, in the dining- or in the tea- or in the smoking-room, or that you see writing in the library, or reading, or even speaking in the House itself, are possessed by one governing sense of self-interest. Every member feels that his position, depending as it does upon those who have elected him, is precarious. He determines, therefore, to make hay while the sun shines. "Let us eat, drink, and be merry," he says, "for to-morrow we may be cast forth into the desert."

This constitutes the inherent cynicism of the modern member of Parliament. The English habit of regarding possible failure with equanimity makes the member of Parliament the reverse of a despairing being. He drops readily into a sententious frame of mind. It

buoys him up upon a sea alike of gloom and of sunshine.

Whatever gaiety of heart he manifests is traceable entirely to the septennial system. He knows when he is elected to a seat that his position is safe so long as the Government can keep the Parliament on its legs, or until, by the efflux of time, the sovereign's fiat puts an end to its existence. So, Long live the septennial Parliament ! he cries.

To realise the frame of mind to which this precarious tenure naturally gives rise is not difficult, and, the thing once realised, the real character of the *jin-de-siècle* M.P. will be seen slowly to unfold itself to the critical understanding.

CHAPTER II.

**HOW TO MAKE A LEGISLATOR—HOW TO REACH THE
WOOLSACK—HOW TO BECOME PREMIER.**

EACH in its own good time. Yet herein we have the text of the object which every man who either sees himself accurately or misunderstands his own powers designs for his pursuit on entering Parliament. It recalls the old watchword of the French soldier who falls a private into line with a field-marshall's baton at the bottom of his knapsack.

Everything has a beginning. The new member has his chrysalis stage, and we will begin by tracing his evolution. Like the young actor, who suffers from not knowing what to do with his arms and legs, the new member is puzzled by not knowing what to do with his hat, when to take the oath, how to secure a seat, and how to sit when he finds one.

Otherwise I might abjectly apologise for these infantile reminiscences.

The young M.P. who wishes to be noticed at the

earliest possible moment should be as nearly as possible the last to take the oath. The oath of allegiance will keep, which obviously is what oaths are intended to do. But a seat, of course, may not keep.

In this way he may be the last to secure a place, which, taken on the opening day of a new Parliament, becomes by an unwritten law his own prescriptive preserve for the entire life of that Parliament. But this, as we shall show at the proper time, may also be held by the tenure of the hat.

There was an Irish member who, on the dawn of a new Parliament, would drive down to Westminster with a cab full of his friends' hats, and these he distributed in chosen corners of vantage as "care-takers," to borrow an old phrase of the "no-rent" manifesto days. These are perhaps trivialities of what should be the most serious place on earth; but even if so, they represent the pleasantries of being serious.

That, however, was in the days of the "working" hat, which acquired its name from being a supplementary *chapeau* kept by the M.P. to hold his place against all comers while he himself, haply, was dallying on the Terrace, enjoying a cigarette in the smoking-room, or distributing Parthian paragraphs on noble selves as he crossed the lobbies. This method of securing a seat can scarcely be said of many seats.

But although the late member may forfeit his advantage, he secures another, which is an introduction at

once to the new House. Six hundred pairs of eyes are upon him in critical investigation, and he is henceforth known to every one of his brother members, for the name of him is promptly buzzed from bench to bench, and he is surveyed from his eyebrows to his boots. It is all that a member just now finds to do.

But the member who has secured a seat for the Parliament by sacrificing his convenience on the altar of his zeal for early induction will find, nevertheless, that unless he be at hand to occupy it as the Speaker takes the chair he forfeits his place for that day. In this case he becomes a houseless political vagrant, a dweller in other men's tents.

Should he be an old member of Parliament, or be held in esteem, no one will, of course, challenge his occupancy—nay, on his appearance will make way for him. But for this convenient distinction the young M.P. must wait.

So in order to secure a scratch seat, or indeed to save one held by the tenure of the card of first comer, you must attend prayers, which, as a concession to custom, is not, I think, dear at the sacrifice.

To be strictly in order at prayers the member must stand with his back to the chaplain and his eyes turned into the hollow of his hat, or the palm of his hand if he have no hat at command.

And here we come seriously to the parliamentary hat. At all times remove your hat on entering the

House, and put it on upon taking your seat ; and remove it again on rising for whatever purpose known to the rubric of parliamentary etiquette.

If the M.P. ask a question he will stand, and with his hat off ; and he may receive the answer of the Minister seated and with his hat on.

If on a division he should have to challenge the ruling of the chair, he will sit and put his hat on. If he wishes to address the Speaker on a point of order not connected with a division, he will do so standing and with his hat off.

When he leaves the House to participate in a division he will take his hat off, but will vote with it on.

If the Queen sends a message to be read from the chair, the member will uncover.

In short, how to take his seat, how to behave at prayers, and what to do with his hat, form between them the A B C of the parliamentary scholar.

But the first question the young or the old M.P. will ask, on re-entering the lobby after taking the oath and his seat, will be to inquire eagerly when the holidays begin ; the first thing that he will do is, secure "a pair" for dinner.

Thus is the gaiety of nations not eclipsed, and pleasure is coupled with the graver responsibilities.

CHAPTER III.

WHAT M.P.-SHIP MEANS.

M.P.'s may be divided into two classes—the members who take parliamentary life seriously, and cheerfully accept the undoubted drudgery of a political career ; and the members who, like the lilies of the field, toil not, neither do they spin, who "look in" languorously at "question time," "pair" for dinner, and consider they have rallied to the side of the Constitution if they vote in a white dress waistcoat at midnight.

The second class constitute by far the larger number of the two. To these gentlemen parliamentary life is but the means to a new pleasure. The pleasure is appreciated because it cannot be exactly purchased. It is an unpurchasable novelty, and it brings to him that enjoys it personal and social advantages which inspire envy amongst those who possess them not, and bitter envy amongst those who have tried to acquire them and have failed in the effort.

And yet a seat in Parliament is considered to be

the privilege of every gentleman born to an estate or a title. It is as much his as the acquired twin qualifications of a good education and the capacity to write at least one sonnet in a lifetime, which constitute, or used to be held to constitute, the equipment of the true dandy. To the legislator who feels himself, in a sense, born to a parliamentary career, the House of Commons is a club which offers the double advantage of being at once a privileged resort of the elect and a pretty rendezvous for friends.

Some of the members belonging to this exclusive class take their duties so lightly that they never quite realise their importance or even their meaning. The dandy sees his Parliament in only one aspect—that of a voting machine. Be loyal to the party, that is all—it is the dandy's motto, the one burden of the political Narcissus. Every day has, at the end of it, one single duty clear and defined, and that is to vote straight. But there is, for the parliamentary dandy, no intelligence in the vote itself. It must be right because the party Whips point the road to be taken ; yet the merits of the subject, on the contrary, may point quite the other way.

It is making no unfair or novel accusation to say that the thing absolutely unknown is the subject of the vote ; and, in taking his decision between the alternatives—the “ayes to the right,” the “noes to the left”—the member summoned from the entertainment

of fair friends on the Terrace obeys a mechanical rule, which is to watch his leader, and follow him.

The life of the politician of leisure is not the life of the working M.P. But before coming directly to this, *the essential motive which I have before me, it is fair to say at once, in the spirit of an old truism, that there is no rule without an exception. Amongst these lilies of the field of politics there are some that struggle to reach the higher light, and they attract a notice of their own. Both sides of the House of Commons contain men of fortune who have entered Parliament not with any sordid motive of making a lucrative profession out of politics. Neither are they men that push or elbow their fellows in a thirst to reach the oasis of Downing Street.

They are good-looking, well-dressed, well-educated, and well-married, or intend to be. Even as men of fortune they take a serious view of parliamentary life. Their social position is secure outside of the adventitious aids to notice acquired by M.P.-ship. Invitations to dinner, cards to "at homes," all the graceful pleasures of the London season, would have been theirs even if they had not entered Parliament at all. • But they differ from the men who take no interest whatever in public life in this, that they find the House full of useful valuable lessons.

Take as a keynote the words of a patrician M.P.

lord, who declares that the House offers the "best training that any young fellow could possibly desire."

Yet the noble viscount, the son of a late viceroy, while holding in thoughtful esteem the opportunities afforded by a parliamentary career, was at the time I write of still a private member, not even a junior Whip, nor yet a private secretary to a Minister, and thankful to learn discipline without a thought of serving his party as a Treasury bencher. This is an excellent spirit in which the gentleman of fortune may go about his duties, even though these are focussed into a vote upon a subject which has been passionately debated in his absence.

CHAPTER IV.

THE POLITICIAN'S BIBLE.

THE Order Book of the House of Commons, a record of the current day's business, is sometimes called the "Politician's Testament." To understand it, the politician must read it; and, to prevent the labour of one day being useless a day later, the reading must be kept up.

The first duty of a member of Parliament, therefore, is to go carefully through the parliamentary papers, which are delivered regularly at his London residence, from ten o'clock to half-past every morning. He should inform himself of the business done last night; then of the business put down for to-day.

The questions come next in order, and these should be read with a view to possibly assisting where the matters alluded to find a special interest for others than the author of the particular point. Then there are the amendments to this bill or to that which may be down for its Committee stage.

These involve the conscientious politician in much delicate as well as irksome labour.

If he would master the importance of these amendments, it is imperatively necessary to compare them with the clauses of the bill concerned. In very many instances the alterations proposed refer to half lines or even single words. The words "proposed to be left out" must be considered in relation to the meaning of the provision or the subsection proposed to be left in, and the alteration of a word has to be weighed for its significance against the word to be displaced.

It used to be said, and I believe accurately, that no one understood Mr Gladstone's great Land Bill but Mr Healy, and no one so completely mastered Sir W. Harcourt's remarkable Death Dues Budget as Mr Thomas Gibson Bowles.

In addition to the amendments down to bills, the careful politician should read the division lists, so as to be ready to "trip up" an hon. gentleman opposite who may later violate his vote on that occasion. Over and above all, the politician must be endowed with a memory as true as steel, and be able to grapple to his recollection what he reads with bands of iron.

Mr Balfour, it may be mentioned as a trait of genius, found drudgery of this kind a sad sore complement to the new pleasures of a fascinating position in the Chamber. A rhetorician and a fighter upon notes taken in the haste or enthusiasm of conflict, Mr

Balfour never formed any taste for the Politician's Testament. His embarrassments, under the casual inquisition of some Perks, or Channing, or Buchanan, or Caldwell opposite, who "wanted to know," are sometimes almost grotesque from unfamiliarity with the elementary arrangement of the Government business of the day.

In one case a reference to the Secretary to the Treasury or the chief Whip, a statement, a correction, a general display of incertitude, led Mr Balfour on one occasion to utter the despairing apology, "I am such a child in these matters." But the stern, unbending business men and the shrewd, alert critics upon the benches opposite would not admit the excuse at all, and scornfully asked why Mr Balfour did not return to the nursery and leave government to men who would take the trouble to learn it. Mr Balfour smiled and nodded approvingly, with a "I should not object, sir."

I recall these incidents in no unfriendly spirit; indeed I may add that the iron went in time into the genial Leader's soul, and he slowly bettered the instruction of the days of his affected infancy.

One of the bitterest slights which a leader can unwittingly show a follower is not to know the name of his constituency, should allusion to the hon. gentleman become necessary in debate. Fancy just for a moment what this means. I have seen many a

proud face mantle with a flush of humiliation as a leader has bent down to his chief Whip, or to a colleague, and "whispered in audible accents," as Mr Goschen would say, "Who is he?" or, "What's his place?"

Sometimes a private member, who may be an acknowledged jester, feigns to, or actually does, forget the name of his leader's constituency. I recall two incidents of the kind in which Mr Labouchere figured, at the expense once of Sir William Harcourt after his translation to the mercy-seat of West Monmouth; and, secondly, of Mr John Morley when he returned to Westminster as member for the Montrose Burghs *via* his defeat in Newcastle.

Two facts must be recorded to Mr Gladstone's credit. He always had the names of his constituencies "pat," and he went down to the House with a perfect knowledge of the business of the day.

Agapitos of the first of these points. Sometimes by a *lapsus linguae* an hon. member may cause a good deal of merriment. A slip of the kind was made once by Mr Jacob Bright, who spoke of Lord Randolph Churchill, sitting at the time for Woodstock, as the "noble lord, the member for Woodcock."

There was a certain appropriateness in the perversion; but though Mr Bright assured me that it was a slip of the tongue, I never quite reconciled myself to the assurance.

After he has mastered the contents of the Order Book, and looked over any "parliamentary returns" which may have come along with the votes, and picked up the main points of the estimates for the Army or the Navy or the Civil Service, and glanced through South Africa No. 10, or Egypt No. 5, or China No. 3, and scanned with serviceable precision the Report of the Royal Commission on Old-Age Pensions, on Agricultural Rating, or Licensing, or Indian Finance, or upon any cognate subject, involving thousands of pages of printed evidence, the hon. gentleman is free to sit down to breakfast.

CHAPTER V.

AN M.P.'S DAY.

BUT here he is faced by a pile of correspondence—principally from constituents, though more generally from persons who have no vote, and, if they had, would probably give it to the “other fellow.” At eleven o'clock he finds himself so preoccupied with House work that he has not time to think of his own affairs. Everything domestic must be postponed until next day. He will dine at home if possible; cannot possibly try that horse, or see to the new victoria; must telegraph to Mr Oils, R.A., to stop the sitting for the presentation portrait, and his wife will have to select unaided the guests for her next dinner-party, “only don't forget Sir Bellowby Schribe, M.P.—he will make us laugh—and remember Lady Hauncett, because she sings as well as any exacting professional soprano.”

At the House the hon. gentleman has a Private Bill Committee, of which he is a member, to attend, and

here he sustains exhausted nature in a vitiated atmosphere for four hours upon a devilled sardine or a glass of milk with a bath bun.

Whisky is now taboo, because it is a modern offence to smell of alcohol.

The work in the committee rooms alone is, I may remark, always irksome, and too often destructive so far as the health of hon. members is concerned. The air becomes rapidly foul from the invariably crowded state of the rooms themselves. Ventilation without incurring grave risks from draughts is not at the Houses of Parliament apparently a scientific possibility. The bills brought up for consideration sometimes have to be supported by the evidence of witnesses not over-clean. There is the fairly well-authenticated case of the first great outbreak of influenza in the House of Commons, which it was declared at the time came up from Sheffield, where it had been raging, and was introduced by the promoters or opponents of a local sewer bill. The gentlemen from Sheffield stoutly and indignantly denied this soft impeachment, and were supported by the local members until the first victim was one of the Sheffield M.P.'s, and he vehemently affirmed that they swallowed the microbes in Committee Room 15, of renown in Irish political history, where they had been "resting" since Mr Parnell's fall.

It is certainly remarkable that the great influenza epidemics of the early 'Nineties followed the reassem-

bling of Parliament, defying such remedies as steam emulsion, disinfectant "pickle," and the "rinsing" of the air before it is permitted to pass through the windows into the Palace.

At three o'clock the ringing of an electric bell announces that the Speaker has taken the chair, and another intimates that questions have begun. The Committee, unless able to decide on the preamble, is adjourned for the day, and the members hurry to the Chamber. Some are interested in questions, others have notices of motion to give; perhaps one is to bring in a new bill.

The House reaches the orders of the day; and the working M.P. interested in the debate may, indeed, have an amendment to move which keeps him a close prisoner from a fear of missing his chance; others may have decided to speak on the second reading of a bill, and must in consequence lie in ambush to "catch the Speaker's eye."

Yet all the while those letters received at breakfast, supplemented by others awaiting the hon. gentleman at the lobby post-office, are lying like an incubus upon his mind. He is conscious that he has ladies to receive for tea on the Terrace; perhaps a mayor and mayoress to entertain at dinner; orders for the Strangers' Gallery to obtain and post; petitions to acknowledge, advice to give, and subscriptions to make to local "Dick Swivellers."

If he can steal a couple of hours during the sitting, they are expended in replying to letters ; and as midnight approaches a crucial division must be faced, for which he has of course to stay, though "dead beat."

Altogether the working M.P. spends from forty-eight to sixty hours in the parliamentary week of four days, with Wednesday off ; and the social, tea-giving, dinner-entertaining, subscription-making, and letter-writing part of the working M.P.'s day represents the light side of parliamentary life, its pleasures, humours, and graces.

Such is a part of the life of the working M.P.

CHAPTER VI.

THINGS TO BE REMEMBERED.

THE following hints to the wise may not be out of place in the art of making a legislator as a preparation for office and the emoluments of the Crown.

In handing a question to the clerks at the table, do not betray the least personal interest in it. Above all, do not hint, however delicately, that this expression or that implication is dear to its author.

In presenting a petition from your constituents, do not attempt to read it in full, which is unparliamentary. Summarise the prayer only, which you may muddle, but muddling *is* parliamentary.

If you intend to move a resolution, simply write your name on a slip of paper and give it to the third clerk, who will put it in a box. In this way the nature of your proposal is kept secret to yourself until your name is called. Then rise, remove your hat, and let the Chamber have in the form of a notice the

nature of the mighty purpose upon which you have mortgaged your reputation.

Of course it may not be accepted by the Government even as a subject of debate. In that case it is never heard of again. It is rejected at the table. But that is another thing. You have burnt your powder any way.

Always be courteous to the clerks at the table. They are the real arbiters of your destiny. Even innocently express wonder at the majesty of their labour. They like it.

Keep clear of the Speaker, however.

Do not attempt to mortgage your reversion in his "eye" by kow-towing. If you purpose joining in the debate, take your chance of being called upon.

Do not beforehand go and tell the Speaker that you wish to address the House. The autocrat of the Chamber, he might oblige you once, even twice, but he would cut you the third time.

Always remember that the occupant of the chair is the First Commoner of England, and the greatest potentiality in Parliament, or at your end of it.

He is fully sensible of his position, and outside of the two front benches all members are to him equal in their rights to unexclusive dealing.

Be not cast down, therefore, because you fail to "catch the Speaker's eye."

I have known a member rise fifteen times in a

quick-change debate and yet never be “called.” The Speaker’s eye is not a revolving orb, nor do his eyes grasp both sides of the Chamber at the same moment.

If you are a new member desirous of “getting a maiden over,” which is delivering your first speech in Parliament, the House itself will come to your aid by cries of “New member!” “New member!” and secure you a hearing against any one but a Minister of the Crown. Even he sometimes is overborne, and is always obliged to preface his intervention with an apology.

CHAPTER VII.

THE HOUSE CONSIDERED AS A FRIEND, OR THE
PENALTY OF BEING DULL.

INDEED the House will rise nobly against its forms, its antiquated official despotism, the cold tyranny of its chair.

The young M.P. will always remember, because he will find, that the House of Commons is the most humane and sympathetic body known to mankind. Its indulgence has passed into a proverb. It is slow to anger, but, once provoked, its wrath and your fate are only to be turned by a stroke of genius. It can endure much, but it cannot brook dulness. By all the powers of reserve given to you, pull up short at being a bore.

The House cannot endure a bore. It will stand genial vulgarity ; even tolerate insolence ; grow accustomed to defiance itself. It can never accommodate its temperament to tedious trifling on the part of a member ; irksome iteration ; truculent self-assertive-

ness. Say something smart, or even impudent, and it will be yours if there is a laugh in what you have said. The House is to be bought cheaply at any time by a laugh. You may be a capital chap in the lobby ; your cigars be readily accepted on the Terrace ; your invitations to dinner win for you the title of "a good fellow" ; but each, or any, or indeed all these attributes together would not save you in the House if the Chamber once came to regard you as a bore.

To be a bore is to be damned politically.

There is no future for you.

To such a man the road to the Woolsack or the premiership, or the humblest official fetcher and carrier on the Treasury Bench, is ruthlessly, impenetrably closed.

In preparing your speeches, avoid being pragmatical. Go straight at your subject. If you have to answer a Minister who is not of your side in party politics, let your retort be smart rather than aggressive.

Be not brutal at any time, but clever or amusing always.

Read the more cynical of the weekly papers. Pick out comic sayings from the works of acknowledged humorists. Let them have a distich now and then, so long as there is sparkle in it. Drop in a tag of Latin occasionally. This is always telling in the House of Commons, because so few now understand

its drift ; and where ignorance exists in these cases respect is assured.

Mr Chamberlain rose to fame on the shoulders of Sam Weller. The Colonial Secretary is a master of 'Pickwick.' The Bible also may prove a gold mine to its political students ; but he who digs here for quotations must be a John Bright or a Wilfrid Lawson.

The House never will suffer to be preached at ; so do not preach, whatever you do. If you have a weak voice, try to concentrate what strength there is in it. Do not posture or rehearse your thoughts before a looking-glass. Master your subject, but for the love of your future do not commit your speech to memory. Prosiness in such a case is inevitable. Prosiness kills. It is as a upas-tree.

Do not in any case address the Chamber as if its inmates were both deaf and blind. Do not tear a passion to tatters, nor roar yourself black in the face. Speak briefly and to the point ; and do not gird at the Speaker's eye too often. It is only a John Burns that can hope to speak every night for a week and survive the ordeal in the continued interest of the House of Commons.

CHAPTER VIII.

SOME LESSONS IN THE FAILURE AND THE TRIUMPH
OF AMBITION.

LET us now touch, by way of encouragement and relief to our lessons, upon the men who did and would.

There are various ways by which the Woolsack or the Premiership may be reached.

The lawyer should have obtained a seat which is safe to his party. That is a second advantage. He should be in good practice, and have acquired a name for power and force of character. He should be unscrupulous in debate, a master of fence, and a slashing assailant. He should be steadily and quickly at the service of the party leader; willing to defend any cause, however tattered; and be ready in an emergency to speak for fifty minutes and say nothing.

If the leader of his court, he should not be above playing "devil" to his leader in the House. He should always know the time o' day; and have a candle ready to hold to his chief in the darkest night.

of party stress and storm, as well as a long spoon for any purpose whatever and anywhere.

To such a man the Woolsack or the Mastership of the Rolls is inevitably a haven of increment and rest.

The way to the Premiership is very often up the steps of one's dead self. But a safe path is one that is paved with the brickbats of mutiny, though edged with brilliant reminiscences.

There is the famous case of Lord Randolph Churchill, who became Leader of the House, and was within an ace also of being Premier. He achieved this distinction by making himself artistically disagreeable to his chiefs.

The Fourth Party became a terror to the leaders of the side of the House to which it belonged ; and its missiles of rhetoric and attack were directed at what its noble inventor called the "old gang."

The Fourth Party was not inherently a brilliant thing any way. Its claim to parliamentary attention lay in the fact that it had the son of a duke at its head. And in truth the House of Commons, in spite of its affected jealousy of "another place," dearly loves a lord. From being regarded as a joke, and its leader a parliamentary *yamin*, the Fourth Party and Lord Randolph Churchill grew by sheer persistency, by the force of collective action, the result of individual sympathies and mutual self-help, into a political force

sufficient at all events to make its own terms with the leaders of the Conservative party.

This was accomplished by making one leader of the party miserable, by open revolt at his policy, and by nicknames hurled at individual members. The *sobriquet* attached to a famous partnership which existed only in Lord Randolph's own mind, that of "Marshall & Snelgrove," will be long remembered. In the Hawarden tree-felling days Churchill spoke of Herbert Gladstone as the "youthful Hercules."

Lord Randolph's invective, his striking descriptions of men, his genial photographs, made him an object for dread. As he passed across the lobby in deep converse with Mr Louis Jennings or linked to Mr Chamberlain, the very air seemed to quiver with possible plots, manœuvres, and stratagems. No one felt wise in including the noble lord in his calculations upon the possibilities of the day after to-morrow.

He was a greater problem out of office than he was in it. Mystery, uncertainty, the unknown, were the sources as well as the explanation of his strength at this time.

As a leader of the Fourth Party Lord Randolph was a jest ; as Secretary for India, and later as Leader of the House and Chancellor of the Exchequer, he was serious, almost demure. He was a *potentissimus* to whom the first position under the Crown seemed but the prize of to-morrow. The promise of his official

youth fulfilled, he should have been at the head of the Unionist forces and on the highroad to the Premiership.

No doubt when Lord Randolph resigned he did not believe that his resignation would be treated seriously by Lord Salisbury. But herein Lord Randolph showed three things—(1) he did not understand Lord Salisbury ; (2) he had overrated his own grip upon the Ministry as a whole ; (3) he found that he could be dispensed with. These are three cardinal blunders from which any young, ambitious, and capable M.P. should pray to be delivered. Known to be possessed by the temptation to commit such follies, he should seek to cast it forth. Better he rushed headlong down the steepest place into the deepest sea !

Take as models of equanimity the two Lord Chancellors, the Earl of Halsbury and Baron Ashbourne.

It seems but a handful of years since one Edward Gibson of the Irish bar came over to Westminster, and, without any great claim to eloquence or stirring debating power, thundered his way to the table. Bracketed in a sense with Mr David Plunket, afterwards Lord Rathmore, both made themselves men of value, though Mr Gibson was without much grace of expression and with a rather heavy address. Mr Edward Gibson nevertheless made himself a power. He could rally the Home Rulers to frenzy. A silver-haired, florid, well-knit man with a solid voice, he

was a striking figure and a notable embodiment of strength, determination, and reserve force always. No one really cared to ask, "What's Gibson talking about?" Every one knew the side to be served was in good hands anyway. Sufficient was it that Edward Gibson, with apoplectic forehead and vigorous gesticulation, was thundering against the Irish Intransigeants of the time. Yet Mr Gibson, now Lord Chancellor of Ireland, never inspired hostility on the Irish benches. In this he resembled Colonel Saunderson. There was no poison in his invective, and Gibson had no foes.

So Edward Gibson became quite naturally Lord Chancellor of Ireland, and Sir Hardinge Giffard on very similar grounds tramped triumphantly to the Woolsack. Lord Herschell became Lord Chancellor by the accident of having been in the way as an ex-solicitor-general when Mr Gladstone found himself abandoned on Home Rule by the Earl of Selborne. Only the other day withal there was Sir Richard Webster, erstwhile Sunday-school teacher, who awoke to find himself Master of the Rolls. So here we have quite a multitude of proofs of what may come from a well-managed parliamentary career.

What is one man's fall is another man's rise. Lord Randolph Churchill out of the way, Mr Arthur Balfour stepped in due time into his place, became Leader of the House, with every probability of be-

coming First Minister of the Crown. Mr Balfour graduated to honours through the limited university of the Fourth Party, of which he was the baby—a pretty languorous, smiling, well-curled baby, but an infant of ability, of penetration, and one that gave earnest of character in a cynical, genial, relentless, iron-handed, velvet-gloved government of Ireland, where one-half the people lived in jail and the other half in trying to join them.

It will be a surprise to many people who remember the distribution of men in the 1880 Parliament to hear that Mr Balfour was not really a member of the Fourth Party. He sat with it. He did not act with it.

The Fourth Party did not take its name from the number of its members, as is generally supposed. It was a party of three, comprising Lord Randolph Churchill himself, Sir Henry Drummond Wolff, and Sir (then Mr) John Gorst, and its noble leader complained to a right hon. friend that he thought it "too big by two."

The reason that Mr Balfour was not accepted as a member is to be found in his relationship to Lord Salisbury. The Fourth Party was at war with Lord Salisbury, and the assailants of the uncle naturally refrained from confiding in the nephew.

Mr Balfour himself has in later years found it convenient to disown his former associates. "I sat with them," he explained—"nothing more than that."

CHAPTER IX.

REALITIES OF AMBITION.

AND that is how Churchill fell. Yet who after this shall say that politics has no charm ; or does not offer a brilliant profession or has no meaning for the young man of capacity, of courage, and of obstinacy ; and may not be turned into the full-bottomed wig of the Lord Chancellor by any lawyer gifted with a little law and great self-confidence and an obstinate refusal to be overlooked, put down, or hedged aside ? Nay, Lord Randolph's triumph as a party rebel was so complete, that he had almost as much to do in framing the Cabinets of 1885-86 as the noble Marquis himself. • It used to be said, indeed, that "Lord Salisbury went to the Queen, and Lord Randolph appointed the Ministers." But at least this may be affirmed, Lord Randolph nominated the Commons set. He himself took India for his share and Mr Arthur Balfour Scotland for his ; Sir Henry Drummond got

an embassy, and Mr Gorst was made Solicitor-General with a knighthood.

Then the noble Warwick brought in a Reformed Home Rule; Mr Henry Matthews, later Lord Llandaff, a personal friend, and he was made Home Secretary, and he also discovered "Dick" Webster.

But to make a rebellion pay it must be successful, and to be successful it must make the insurgent a terror to a party or a Cabinet—a Cabinet, of course, preferred. He must not be dull. The House of Commons can forgive much, it cannot forgive dulness. Hapless, as I have said, the fate of the legislator who is dull. Better he had never sought to enter the portals of the Chamber, or at least had held his peace.

There is only one instance on record of success coming to a private member not backed by title or influence, and who made for his quarry the Premier of the party opposite. That man was Sir Ellis Ashmead Bartlett. But he was not a rebel. I quote this not against Sir Ellis, but to show how a private member, working singly and persistently at one object, may realise the beginning at least of gratified vanity. It is a lesson worth putting, because worth remembering.

Persistency did it. "Bartlett on Central Asia," "Bartlett on Perjdeh," "Bartlett to the Rescue of Gordon"—*Toujours* Bartlett. In each case the

speech was directed solely at the head of Mr Gladstone. Mr Bartlett got Mr Gladstone into all his speeches. The member for Eye, as he then was, stood ready at any moment to step into the deadly lifeless breach of the dinner-hour, and thus assist in keeping the debate going for absent Ministers.

There is, *apropos* of this, the story of how Mr Disraeli, wishing to keep going a debate on a point then undergoing settlement, asked the Irish Solicitor-General to "speak for fifty minutes and say nothing."

But to return. This kind of thing went on for years until in 1886, Lord Salisbury, coming into power, held the loaves and fishes, and suitably marked out for reward the hon. member who had thus worked so zealously to make himself a terror to the Government bench. Lord Salisbury, always witty, probably remembering how bitterly Mr Ashmead Bartlett had used his tongue at Mr Gladstone's expense, made him "Civil" Lord of the Admiralty. That, indeed, was the interpreted jest at the time.

Mr Chamberlain's case is a little different. He was made a Minister through fear of Sir Charles Dilke. Mr Chamberlain passed to Cabinet rank without graduating in Government employment at all. This was contrary to Mr Gladstone's own known ethics of service under the Crown, and it nearly led to a "hitch" in the formation of the Cabinet. The right hon. gentleman aimed at flag rank before he had

passed in navigation. He was assisted to Cabinet rank by Sir Charles Dilke, who, it is a tradition of the time, made the recognition of his friend's abilities the condition precedent of his own entrance into office. Yet Mr Chamberlain has done well.

Sir William Harcourt was one of Mr Chamberlain's earlier admirers, which caused an hon. friend with a seat on the front Liberal bench to say in later years, "I would love Harcourt better if he liked Joe less."

When Mr Rhodes fell over the raid, Mr Labouchère said to the present writer, "Joe and I have buried our hatchets in Rhodes's grave, and sworn eternal friendship over his remains."

A favourite phrase of Mr Chamberlain's used to be, "None are so blind as those who won't see." A favourite mannerism of his is to point a dialectical triumph over an opponent by an upward movement of the forefinger upon his nose. When President of the Board of Trade in the '80 Cabinet, he had in hand the Merchant Shipping Bill. Mr Warton, seeing the right hon. gentleman wearing an orchid, cried, "Ah, I see the President of the Board of Trade means mischief to the shipping interest, for he has a starfish in his buttonhole."

Let us now retrace our steps and consider another stage in the evolution of the M.P.

CHAPTER X.

FORMING A MINISTRY.

THE formation of a Ministry calls into play the finer instincts of patronage; but it sometimes occurs that the instincts are more honoured in the breach than in the observance. There is nothing in the form of a public trust which is so open to abuse. We all are familiar with the consequences of the law of primogeniture. The eldest son succeeds to the estates, the scamp of the family goes into the Army, the, well —genius of the family is put into the Church. But property has its duties, though these, misconceived by the person on whom they devolve, are distorted into a right to go to Westminster, sit in Parliament, and obtain office under the Crown.

This plausible affectation of mercenary rights in the privileges of property, nevertheless, has cemented into a class exaction, and thus every Minister charged with the responsibility of forming an Administration has invariably a batch of sacred supporters to count with.

Lord Salisbury has them in persons whom any student of the Government Year-Book may find out for himself.

Mr Gladstone was something of an actor, and the graver side of his intensely dramatic character was presented boldly to the public gaze when he started forth in obedience to a summons to Windsor. He was then, and perhaps only then, the reality of Sir John Millais' famous portrait of many Academies ago. Mr Gladstone's face as he left Paddington was a study of solemn responsibility, mixed with a faint resignation to a disagreeable task.

This, however, is but the art of concealing art, and it was practised, though with a more Asiatic solemnity, and a slower and more stagey movement, by Lord Beaconsfield, who walked slowly, leaning upon the arm of his faithful private secretary, his chin buried upon his breast, his eyes cast almost penitentially upon the ground. Of course it is impossible not to feel that behind this lugubrious bearing there is a bubbling sense of unaffected humbug. Government is a serious matter only for those who have the piper to pay. For our rulers it means, from the Prime Minister down to the First Lord of the Admiralty, a happy mixture of ornamental authority, social distinction, and a graduated scale of remuneration, more or less princely, though always ridiculously out of proportion to the deserts of the self-appointed minor occupants of the Treasury Bench.

Until Lord Randolph Churchill valiantly kicked at what he mercilessly and irreverently nicknamed the "old gang," Ministers were selected almost upon the heredity principle. It was an affair entirely of exclusive dealing. No one challenged the wisdom of the operation. Nay, the quidnuncs whose business it is to put Cabinets together in advance of the authorised workmen, settled the whole thing in a newspaper paragraph. Men were fitted in to where they had been fitted previously.

Mr Gladstone, more than any Prime Minister that I can recall, or whose methods I am acquainted with, was governed by precedent. He had a weak side to his character. Without being a vain man, in the lower reading of the word, he had all a great man's susceptibility. There were three men, till lately living, who entered into a rivalry with each other,—who, in fact, ran a race with one another,—to be the first to knock at Mr Gladstone's front door and congratulate him upon the result of the elections, and to place their services individually at his disposal. These gentlemen were found in the Liberal Cabinet, holding the very best places, and the predictions of the paragraphists stood confirmed.

I remember the formation of the Government of 1880, when certain gentlemen, whom it is unnecessary to name, went down to Lord Granville's, where the Administration was put together, and dictated

their own terms to the master-builder. So well was the dictation pressed home that one of the dictators put himself into the — Office, another put himself into the — Office, with a seat in the Cabinet, all upon the strength of a progressist reputation, unchastened by great official training. An exception should be made to the rule which has grown out of the pretensions of the acred and titled classes.

There is the well-authenticated case of a certain dean who had been consulted upon his acceptar.. of a bishopric, whose readiness to take lawn was communicated to her Majesty, but whose indiscreet communication to the press caused him to "hear no more about it."

Let us be for a moment imaginative. The men waiting for the call are a group of political opportunists. The bell is to ring for them—if it do ring. I do not know that the party Chauvinist of to-day is any worse, any more clamant, any more obtrusive than the origin of the species in the dim and distant realms of the past. Juvenal wrote of the men at the foot of the table of Cæsar. We have greatly improved upon that. Belted Earls went about with squires holding their stirrups, and an aged modern statesman has been waylaid in Westminster by expectant placemen with solicitous offers of assistance as he struggled thumbily with the buttons of his over-coat, or fretted with the catch of his umbrella. The

'Reminiscences of a Political Place-Hunter' would not have the merit of novelty, though for the great mass of the public it would necessarily prove very sad reading. It is all patriotism, of course. It is part of the Battle of the Shibboleths.

The men who are "in" are, say the men who are "out," ruining the country.

The youngster will take what he gets, and wait patiently till he gets it, and satisfaction will swell within his bosom. But the "young men," as the phrase goes, or the middle-aged gentlemen, who have "waxed fat and scant o' breath," and are waiting to get their elbows into the Treasury for the first time in their lives, pursue a distinctly different line of action. They appoint themselves to office. "I," says one, "will be Secretary for Scotland." "I," cries a second, "will take over the Navy;" and "I the Army," puts in a third promptly. "My *métier* is local government," proceeds a fourth. "I am qualified for Postmaster-General, as I have addressed labour meetings in Hyde Park;" "I have studied the Armenian question, and so have fitted myself for the Foreign Office;" "I have broad views about the right of public meetings in Trafalgar Square, and therefore should be given the Home Office;" and "I take an interest in the County Council, and so would like the Local Government Board"—so shout the rest

CHAPTER XI.

THE GREAT OFFICES OF STATE.

THE offices of pleasure under the Crown are those of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Minister for War, and the First Lord of the Admiralty. These gentlemen very rarely find themselves departmentally responsible for a shred of legislation, though they are, of course, theoretically responsible with the Cabinet as a whole. The Chancellor of the Exchequer has his harvest-time of labour, but he ploughs not, neither does he sow. Others reap for him—the Treasury officials are his harvest-men; he only shows what the grain of the nation amounts to in bulk, and what he proposes to do with it. To drop metaphor, the Chancellor of the Exchequer is only really busy when he comes to strike the balance between revenue and expenditure, and to decide what he shall do with the surplus if there be one, or how he shall disguise his loss if there be no surplus.

The Minister for War and the First Lord of the

Admiralty find their annual duties concentrated in the Estimates for the year. When these are laid before Parliament and passed, the rest is all mere routine—inspection of south coast arsenals, picturesque reviews in the Long Valley, or other kinds of official junkettings. It is not always that England is seriously at war, or that the army has to be reorganised or the navy rebuilt in obedience to popular clamour.

The real working offices are those of Home and Irish affairs. The Foreign Office, moreover, carries a load of exacting interviews with Ambassadors, and the reading of despatches from those eminent servants of the State who, as Wotton had it, “lie abroad for their country’s good.”

The First Lord of the Treasury, if Prime Minister, is the least heavily burdened of the men who labour in the vineyard of the Crown. He is really, in administrative, and executive, and legislative life, what in another and less exalted, but scarcely more merciful, sphere is known as a referee. He holds the sponge, and generally has to throw it up at some period of his public life.

The amount of time given by a Minister to his department depends, of course, either upon the department itself or upon the temperament of the Minister. This, in any or either case, is not the least interesting part of the subjects of the day in the life of a working M.P.

The hardest worked department of the State is unquestionably the Foreign Office, and of the two Ministers directly responsible to Parliament for foreign affairs the bulk of the labour naturally falls upon the Under Secretary of State. From seven to eight hours daily was given to the department by Mr Brodrick, which is independent of House time. When Mr Brodrick served the War Office as Under Secretary he gave six hours daily to Pall Mall; and as Mr George Wyndham, the new Under Secretary, had everything to learn, besides being equally ardent in the affairs of a most interesting branch of the public service, he certainly did not contribute less than that minimum of his life to it.

At one time the Colonial Office was the lightest worked of the Crown Offices. Its ways, indeed, were senile or grandmotherly. Mr Chamberlain changed all this, and now the Colonial Office almost ranks with the Foreign Office in the multitude of the daily engagements which press for consideration. Between the hour of leaving home, or of starting his official survey of Greater Britain, and his return, Mr Chamberlain may be said to have given fourteen hours a-day to the service of his country.

During the crisis which followed the Jameson raid the Colonial Secretary was at his office down to midnight, and on one occasion drove into the City in connection with this crisis at 2 A.M. During the crisis

round Fashoda, and the naval mobilisation, Mr Goschen was frequently at his desk in his private room at the Admiralty at 8.30, and dinner was as frequently postponed for the convenience of the First Lord. Mr Goschen passed five hours a-day at the Admiralty, and usually nine hours at the House afterwards, where he had a private room, which was shared by his son, the member for East Grinstead, who was the private secretary to the First Lord.

But the existence of a Cabinet Minister is very pleasant, and no one, unless he be some super-conscientious public servant like the late Mr Smith, is inclined or silly enough to take his office seriously. Perhaps if a portfolio carried with it permanency, he might treat his office seriously. But it is the brevity of the incumbency at the most that makes it necessary to treat the responsibility in the light of a Heaven-sent chance which may not be repeated.

The Cabinet Councils, therefore, are mortifications to the round of autumnal pleasures, apparent rather than real. Their inherent delights are so manifold as to dwarf the dignities of country life, and cast in the shade the traditional entertainments of an English gentleman's castle. To those enjoying such exquisite sweets for the first time, these sittings in Downing Street must offer the rarest delights of a veritable Elysium. The enjoyment, moreover, is heightened by the sweet smile of approving women.

It is, verily, a return to the lordly omnipotence of Olympus, with the capacity for satisfaction intensified as the pleasures have been broadened, and their details brought into harmony with the Victorian era. So, do not drop a tear as you think of Ministers "toiling and moiling" in Council. There is no gratification like unto the nourishment of an opulent vanity.

CHAPTER XII.

THE COST OF M.P.-SHIP.

AN autumn session is not popular amongst those who contribute to it. The public who have to pay the piper find it costly. Sir William Harcourt once estimated its cost in my hearing at £30,000. That estimate is not excessive, and it only shows how much John Bull has to pay for the pleasure of having his views upon the cult of a crisis represented by the chosen people of his suffrage.

Of course there are men who like Parliament to sit at any time and for all time, or at least just as long as it suits their special convenience. These are the patriotic and self-denying M.P.'s who find the House of Commons the best and cheapest club in London, and, indeed, as a place of daily residence, the most desirable anywhere. Here they can for a very small sum of money live upon the best at the tariff of a cheap restaurant. The man who loves his grill can obtain his chop or his steak at 9d.; if he have a

weakness for gin, he can tickle his appetite for 2d. ; he has no “table money” to face, and his dinner equipage is of the best.

I remember a bishop going to the Savage Club with a friend of that caravanserai, and he marvelled at the price of the gin sold in the Savoy. His lordship said that at the Athenæum the juice of the juniper was retailed at 4d. per glass—a fact which caused the Savage to reconsider the prudence of joining the home of erudition in Pall Mall, where the Bishop had promised to “put him up.”

But the pleasures of the minority notwithstanding, the great majority find parliamentary life, even in an ordinary session, severe enough. No doubt there are gentlemen, and many of them, who just join the House as a convenient annexe to their own lives. It is a gentleman’s due. It is a squirearchical complement ; a duty which the cadet of a noble house owes to himself ; a preserve which brings game to the lawyer, the stockbroker, and the man of letters. Still it is one of those advantages which hon. gentlemen like to put on and off when they will. They do not like the advantage to press heavily or in the nature of a duty. In that case the galled jade winces. The autumn has its own pleasures. There is the Riviera ; there is foreign travel in Eastern regions ; the pursuit of sunshine and blue sky. At home or in London both have disappeared. Hence a call to

St Stephen's in October or November upsets many esteemed plans, and may lead to a good deal of "language."

There is evidently something abnormally attractive in a parliamentary career. I have shown what the position means to a working M.P. who takes his life at Westminster seriously. I have also thrown a sidelight upon the calls made upon his time and his purse by constituents. I have only to add that ~~for~~ the privilege of being overworked in a vitiated atmosphere, always running risks and sustaining attacks of illness, principally influenza, and occasionally blood-poisoning, giving up most of the social or personal pleasures of a man of fortune, of refined tastes, and with abundance of friends, the working M.P. has to pay £5 a-day. This, at least, is the daily average cost of a seat in the House of Commons during six months of the year, and for a period of six years, as the price is computed by the experience of an hon. friend, who pays £1500 for his election, and another £1500 perhaps for his defeat at the preceding election, and who has to answer various local calls upon his purse, to entertain constituents in town, and to visit the constituency itself at least once a-year.

The entertainers of the House form a definite and distinctive coterie. They are of no special rank or age. They never are heard to speak unless it be in

the form of a request for a new smoking-room, a new ladies' gallery, or a new way to the Terrace, or unless it be in reference to the pleasures of the table, or the comfort of the dining-rooms downstairs, or the opening of the ladies' gallery to full view of the House. In conversation the members of pleasure are exclusively affected by the probable length of the session, the duration of the recess at Easter or at Whitsuntide, the possibility of adjourning for the Derby. There is a member who in thirty years has made but one speech, and that lasted one minute; and I recall a county representative who sat in three successive Houses without finding the way to the vote office. These support the social side of Parliament right royally.

I take it from observation at close quarters that the least enviable Minister is the Home Secretary. He has an enormous measure of public duties. There is nothing in his career in Parliament Street that bears the name of, or comes near to, heroism. He cannot have the world dwelling upon his fiat, as the Colonial Secretary may pride himself upon seeing it do. He is an administrative Minister pure and simple. Unlike the Leader of the House, he cannot enjoy first-class responsibility. Excepting in the case of the reprieve of a convict, his decision matters little to any one. The Secretary of State is a glorified policeman. He has nothing to do

with anything but what savours of Scotland Yard or the magistracy. No sunshine enters into the Home Office, and the life of the Secretary of State is sunless. It may not come to drudgery exactly; but the duty of the department is not at all inspiring. The Home Office has no policy of its own. It is directed by precedent and held in check by red-tape. It is unpicturesque, unemotional, and unhistory-making.

The duties of the Home Office are bewildering, prolix, and multifarious. The department is a labyrinth of responsibilities. Its official hospitality covers incurable drunkards, convicts and convict establishments, prisons and prisoners, lunatics, police, coroners' inquests; accidents, public meetings in what is within the Constitution "a place" like Trafalgar Square, workmen's strikes and employers' liability, cabs and omnibuses, railway collisions and boiler explosions, judicial reviews in cases of murder, machinery, besides many other seemingly incongruous, irreconcilable subjects.

The Local Government Board is a department of sporadic industry like the Board of Agriculture, its labour influenced largely by seasons. Its Minister may be made miserable anon by a scarcity of water in the East End, or as the other is by the revolt of women whose dogs have been muzzled in the public interest.

No duties to speak of are attached to the office of First Lord of the Treasury, which is usually a salary- and Premier-carrying sinecure; and excepting when Budget time is approaching, the Chancellor of the Exchequer is an official enjoying the well-paid leisure of £5000 a-year. The Board of Trade used to be the lightest of the departments of the Crown, and for that reason Mr Bright was induced to become President, and partly as well because he must manifestly have had natural sympathy in its work; but now the responsibilities of the Board of Trade are multiplied tenfold.

The days of the Minister who leaves his duties to the permanent officials have gone, but their passage was marked by many a hard-fought struggle with the permanent officials. The Minister of to-day differs from his predecessors of fifty years ago. He insists upon a root-and-branch understanding of his office and its duties, and will father no second-hand responsibility. One of the first to exhibit this strong individualism in responsibility was the present Duke of Devonshire, when at the India Office, and again at the War Office. Mr Heneage (now Lord Heneage), when Chancellor of the Duchy, pithily focussed the new individualism in the remark made to the writer, "I sign all I write, and write all I sign."

The meaning of this is of course that the Minister knew what he signed. It was not administration

upon a blank signature. Ministers no longer can afford to make mistakes, especially in an age when parliamentary inquisition has become a terror, and the instinct of the private member for seeing through official green-haize doors has become analogous to genius.

The ‘Athenæum,’ in a friendly notice of the first edition of ‘Our House of Commons,’ pointed out that the Home Office *has* a policy of its own, which comes ~~into force~~, for example, in industrial matters. This is true, and it is true also of the Local Government Board and the Board of Agriculture. But this particular policy is not the policy which I had in mind. I might describe mine as the “inner circle” policy.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE TREASURY BENCH.

"AND now," said Mr Labouchere, "I will go and enjoy the smiles of the new Ministers." The Treasury Bench is the happy land of the parliamentary traveller. It is a region of sweetness and light. The responsibilities of office, as I have already suggested, do not impair the appetite for place or make the padded leather hard or unwelcome. The new Ministers have taken very kindly to their luxurious quarters. One of the most moving sights in the House, indeed, used to be found in the beaming satisfaction of the then Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Sir William Harcourt in that character would "smile all over his face" and "right round the back of his head," as some one said of the late Mr William Henry Smith. As Mr Goschen blinked and winked and rubbed his jaw—a reflective mannerism of that right hon. gentleman—and looked across the table, he must have felt all a good man's satisfaction in the contemplation of another's happiness.

Mr Gladstone grew, in the course of his long service of fifty years, too accustomed to both Front Benches to manifest much exultation of soul when seated upon the one, or to reveal any depression when consigned, by an ungrateful House or a thoughtless country, to the shadow which rests upon the other.

This is a pleasing testimony to the veteran statesman's *sang-froid*. Indeed Mr Gladstone, in regard to his public life, almost habitually took "his pleasures sadly." Mr John Morley, from a cause which is not traceable to long experience in the vicissitudes of public life, did not present the outward and visible presence of joy. Mr Morley had a mind to mend the world. But the world is a tough subject, and so, doubtless, its mentor grew sad with the sense of his ill-requited labours. At least this was the outward seeming of the Chief Secretary. But upon the inner mask of the face Mr Morley betrayed a joy quite as keen and broad as Sir William Harcourt displayed to an enraptured House. We have it written upon the authority of the late Mr Louis Jennings, who probably hoped for an opportunity of some day serving his country, that there is nothing in all the earth so grateful or soothing to the politician as office. Lord Randolph Churchill felt it and lost it. The man who once feels the pressure of the Treasury Bench, added Mr Jennings, carries through the remainder of his life a

conviction that there is nothing else that feels like unto it.

Sir William Harcourt, the most ingenuous statesman living, is too frank and boyish to conceal his pleasure, and the infection of his happiness spread along the bench until it vanished in the irradiated lineaments of the Civil Lord of the Admiralty.

The admiring observer feels this community of happiness rather than sees it. As a matter of strict accuracy of statement, the Ministers conceal their gratification : Mr Henry Chaplin, for example—as President of the Local Government Board—gazed upon the Chamber with the wistful zeal of a glorified poor-law guardian, conscious of his opportunities, and eager to distribute corporeal consolation.

Mr Chaplin slightly recalls the expression worn by Gladstone's Chief Secretary. It of course lacks Mr Morley's habitual struggle between austerity and despair. Mr Chaplin looks across the House with a smile. But this smile is one of those that suggest benevolent toleration of the manifest wrong-headedness of rival doctrinaires. It is a smile with a shake of the head in it. It is the smile which travellers see in the face of a beatific joss on oriental roadways. It is a smile half of sympathy, half of pity ; but, somehow, it is a smile which to a cowering pauper would never seem to have a penny in it.

So of Ministers all round, whether they be those

about Mr Balfour or those right and left of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman—how intensely happy are all these gentlemen at the opportunity of correcting the errors of their wicked predecessors and putting the wrong right.

The new occupants of the Treasury Bench are seldom seen in the lobbies or corridors of the House. They are more “agreeably occupied.” They carry something in their pockets more desirable than empty hands. The night of expectation has passed into the day of fulness and of gratitude. The paragraphists have served their purpose, and are now munching the thistles of contentment. The erstwhile authors of “inspiration” paragraphs, conceived in the interest of noble selves, are to-day full of bills for the common good. The paragraphists who helped the new Ministers to sow what the aspirants to office hoped to reap are no longer needed.

In fact their discretion is now a doubtful possession. Indeed the lobby has, for the new statesmen, become the resort of idleness. It is really wonderful how the perception is narrowed and blurred when the politician views his interests upon the Treasury Bench as compared with a back seat in Opposition.

“These,” said the discreet controversialist, “are my views,” pointing to his front garden; “my opinions I keep to myself.”

“How do?” cries the smug Under Secretary,

scurrying across the lobby like a special correspondent under fire. "Awfully sorry, but my mouth is closed," and he is gone. And the maker of Ministers finds that he has been dropped.

Parliamentary friendships made over the rolling log last but a short time. The Minister is glad to forget, and he assists forgetfulness by absenting himself from the scene of his log-rolling.

But is it not so all round the official compass?

CHAPTER XIV.

THE M.P.'S WATCHWORD.

“BE kind to ourselves” is the new watchword of the House of Commons. The only people at St Stephen’s who look sadly at existence is the Speaker, cut off during the London season from the nightly gaieties of the town, and the Government Whips, who are embarrassed by the paradoxical tendency of their flocks to use the privilege of their state to bolt from the division pen by the simple expedient of keeping away from it altogether. As for the flock themselves, they derive all the pleasure available from the broad, social pastures which Westminster opens to their enjoyment.

The guiding rule is to get all the happiness possible out of Parliament. Of course there be people who are never happy anywhere. No one really believes its privileges to be seriously threatened ; no one is disposed to regard these “ancient monuments” of a past-time panic as involving a modern sacrifice.

The pillory has passed away ; it is unlikely that the Clock Tower will be any more used as a prison. The admonition is found sufficient for the purpose ; and certainly, in the strong, impressive diction of Mr Speaker Peel, it is more than sufficient to slay the moral worm it is directed against.

' The House is nothing if not charitable, and the privileges, which Mr Peel insisted constituted no "shadowy or unsubstantial thing," were devised as a bar against the predatory incursions of a money-seeking monarch. They have survived the old race of kings. They have been since cemented by the action of time into a code of fossil mummeries.

The Speaker himself seems to consider they stand in need of a little polishing up. In his delightful little work on the House of Commons, Sir Reginald Palgrave tells some funny stories of the tenacity of the House in a former age—so far, that is to say, as its privileges were concerned. "All sorts and conditions of men," and women too, were haled to its bar, and made, some of them, to kneel for mercy before a furiously malignant Speaker ; clergymen and apple-women, City aldermen and horse-jobbers, authors and milkmen, street-singers and sponging-house pimps, even ploughmen and peers, have had to make obeisance to the Chamber. The Speaker had power not only to commit to Newgate, but to the Tower itself, and Sir R. Palgrave tells a quaint story con-

cerning the determination of the House to possess itself of its member.

To the rich the House is a club where friends may find entertainment. Such entertainment, indeed, is unique. It is not to be purchased for money or love. The very exclusiveness of parliamentary life, the difficulty of obtaining a share in it, the vast sums of money expended upon the effort, the fact that there is necessarily a blank to set off every success, the certainty of a depressing disappointment on the one side as the antithesis of a feverish triumph on the other, serves to invest the House of Commons with a mystery and an interest that can only be called dramatic, if not tragic.

An hon. member, who recovered Frome from the Unionists, admitted to the writer that when once a man has sat in the House he never ceases to pine for a renewal of the privilege. It haunts him, gets into all his thoughts, obtrudes itself as a skeleton into all his triumphs and joys—becomes, in fact, the skeleton on his hearth. The bitterness of his later defeat becomes all the keener because of the joy of his former triumph. There is no doubt that to some—in fact, to the majority—of the conscript fathers the pleasures of parliamentary life brighten even their toilet. See a man who has been defeated and “looks in” some night; how faded he is! I recall an hon. gentleman who served as private secretary

a certain Minister of Agriculture. He is naturally a man of academic appearance, good looking, tending towards smartness. Seen as ex-member, in serviceable overcoat, wind-tossed hat, and thick stick, he might have been a bailiff's man come to "spot" a debtor, or an excise officer with a warrant to serve upon Lord Stanley for "selling drink without a licence." Even the artificial splendour of Mr G. W. E. Russell, and every atom of Sir Edward Birkbeck's good nature, or Lord Elcho's perennial dazzle, cannot conceal the ravages of the disappointment so graphically described by my Frome friend.

No man likes to lose. This hatred of defeat to the English politician sullies all his triumphs and joys elsewhere. And he will frankly tell you, if so fortunate as to obtain re-election, that he is thoroughly glad to be back again. The M.P. who is "out" shows that he is out by the lack-lustre surface of his hat and the general decay and indifference of his attire.

CHAPTER XV.

THE EX-M.P.

THE pleasures of the new M.P. strike a painful chord in relation to what have been the privileges of the ex-M.P.

By a recent regulation for the better government of the House of Commons the status of the ex-member has been greatly lowered. In this we see the punitive hand of victory over the defeated. The status of the ex-M.P., indeed, may be said to have been suddenly and ruthlessly swept away.

There is a saying in Scotland that a man who has once been a bailie is always a bailie. He is certainly ever after designated by that honoured prefix—the badge and symbol of his former state. The ex-M.P., equally, never can forget that he has sat under Big Ben. His friends will not suffer him to forget it, and should he a “guinea-pigging go,” or be rendered prominent upon the platform, or as a patron of some philanthropic or other redeemable office, it is pretty

sure to be announced that he has sat in council at Westminster. The synonym of dignity and usefulness, "ex-M.P.," marking him as one who has been privileged of the mortals, will indubitably find its way to the ear or eye of the common folk.

Undoubtedly M.P.-ship carries, like the Scottish bailieship, a train of potential reminiscences. For, to have sat in the House of Commons, or to have administered justice from the bench, marks the lucky individual out for the respect of the nation, if not, indeed, as one who is thrice blessed of Providence. A fallen monarch never can forget, or the world for him, that he was one of the Lord's anointed.

But the House of Commons is not at all sensitive on the point. For generations—for so long, indeed, that, in the words of Blackstone, "the memory of man runneth not to the contrary"—ex-members of Parliament enjoyed a *bonne bouche* of reminiscent or post-mortem privileges of their former state. The House of Commons, in all but its debating forum, was open to their unrestricted enjoyment. They were permitted to enter by the private entrance—the entrance reserved exclusively for members themselves. They might even hang up their hats and coats in the cloak-room, which is the special appurtenance of the elect. The Terrace was not closed to their cigars or their meditations or their fair companions.

The attendants recognised them, and made obeisance to their ancient state.

The police on guard at the different inner corridor doors bowed the visitors through. They had come to revisit the pale glimpses of the moon. Even the dining-room was open to their accommodation. They could sip their sherry at the counter of the members' buffet, and when the debate attracted them to the gallery, there was always a seat at their disposal in the special balcony. Though technically "strangers" themselves, the customary iron regulations which do hedge the makers of Parliament—that is, the electors—were non-existent in their case.

There are many fossils of this honourable class. It is now many years since William Shaw led the Irish party of Repeal and himself had a seat in the Chamber. Yet he might have been seen, like a spectre from the dim grey sepulchre of the past, waiting, though in a condition of monumental unhappiness, for some one of whom he desired speech and tarried within. Sir Patrick O'Brien may be mentioned, much bowed and grizzled, yet wearing apparently the very same plaid of yellow frieze trousers in which he would deliver his stentorian, "Ah, Mister Speaker-r-r, So-r-r-r, if there is any mischief abroad in this House, which ought to be devoted to doing good, we may be sure of such a crowd as I now see before me."

Sir Patrick, when in town, would drop in just to look for survivors of the old times, though without finding many—Major O'Gorman, Major O'Byrne, The O'Donoghue, The O'Conor Don, Mr Macartney, Mr O'Shaughnessy, and a score of others. The burly Sir Robert Peel, the “right hon. baronet who,” as some one said, “flourished upon the shade of a distinguished name,” also might have been seen within, gazing like an effigy of the legitimate drama from the special balcony, ready, as it seemed, to rise, and, with measured stride, begin the soliloquy, “Is that a dagger?” for Sir Robert looked like a burly Thane.

All these gentlemen were “privileged.” They were at liberty to come and go at their sweet will. They could do so no longer. Their leave had been stopped. The new regulation reduced them except in one respect to the level of the merest stranger. This single privilege is that of entering the inner lobby. But the private entrance is now closed to ex-members. Their road is that which is traversed by the non-elect. They may not hang up their coats in the cloak-room.

If they desired to penetrate beyond the inner lobby, the new regulation enjoins in that case the necessary possession of an hon. member as escort. This certainly will carry its holder downstairs and upstairs and out upon the Terrace. But the bearer is simply a “ticket-of-leave man.” He is a stranger. He cannot enjoy his old social privileges. He cannot enter

the members' smoking-room or dine. He must possess himself of permission to hear the debates, and when he leaves it must be down the vulgarised path taken by those who have never sat in the fane of the Legislature, and who are not entitled to adorn themselves even with the magic initials ex-M.P.

This is a most stringent regulation, whose beauty lies in its effectiveness, and whose whip and sting are in the suddenness of its conception and application. Not a whisper of it was heard until the very moment that it was issued. It burst upon the executive authorities of the Chamber one afternoon like the proverbial "bolt from the blue." Unaware of it, ex-members came down tripping and smiling as usual, only to be stopped at the entrance and directed round to the public door opposite the Poets' Corner. Not much poetry in this.

I recall the late Mr Childers, ex-Cabinet Minister, Secretary for War, First Lord of the Admiralty, Chancellor of the Exchequer, who, fresh from the south of France, ruddy, and eager to see the "new Ministry, and bask in their smiles," as Mr Labouchere had it, drove down, only to be sent round with the rest. And it certainly was curious to witness the end of an immemorial custom dying in the bewildered gaze of our visitors as they learned that the ex-member is no better in the eye of the House than the unknown stranger.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE TRUE INWARDNESS OF THE M.P.

HOWEVER and from whatever point you may study the M.P., he is an object of interest and of reflection always. He enters the House of Commons with a fixed conviction that it is full of possibilities of some kind ; and he steers for a time steadily towards that of his choice. Of course there are exceptions to this prosaic spirit of individual advancement. Some of the young men, backed by territorial possessions or family influence, do not take their public duties so seriously. It is indeed difficult to make these butterflies of legislation take Westminster seriously. But even the exceptions may help to prove the rule as laid down by Froissart, though in a spirit happily distinct from that suggested by the old philosopher—that is to say, that Englishmen take their pleasures sadly.

But it is not exactly from the point of view of a hard and diligent worker that the M.P. is to be studied. It is rather in the light of a creature of pleasure in the

high tide of the London season that I wish to present the hon. gentleman to notice. One insensibly pities the borough parvenu who, given a seat in Parliament by a constituency cruelly anxious to be kind, applies himself to the task of earning re-election. He works diligently by asking questions, moving for returns, and then, greatly daring, peppering the notice paper with resolutions which, not loved of the gods of the ballot, obtain no day.

Such a man falls hopelessly into what Mr Disraeli called the Serbonian bog. He becomes, indeed, the victim of an ambitious wife, who believes that her husband, as the possessor of the mystic letters M.P., holds the open sesame to the halls of "Sassietty."

Of course the shepherds of the party come occasionally to the rescue. It is not desirable, for party reasons, to quarrel even with a bore, for bores, like another form of worm, will undoubtedly turn. Other deserving units have an equal claim to attention, and must be propitiated. Hence it comes sadly to this, that the wife or daughter, but more especially the wife, of the working M.P. discovers very early in the first session of her husband's new career that a political life for her, at all events, is not an affair of garden-parties, at homes, and dances.

She has, it is true, the run of the Terrace, but this soon palls. The hope—we may even say the despairing hope—of the M.P. who relies upon the sup-

posed magical influence of these cabalistic letters for such social recognition as he may receive is that during the recess he will be "taken up." There is Mr So-and-so, who has a shooting somewhere in the North. He has been civil. He has even sent, or his wife has sent, cards to Mrs Jenkinson, and has also asked indolently where Mr Jenkinson intends to spend the recess. It is really wonderful how, towards the end of the session, men who have favours to dispense are sought out by those who have all to receive.

But though here and there one may meet with Mr and Mrs Ponsonby Smyth, or Mr and Mrs Kennington Green, at a country house, it has to be sadly confessed that for a large proportion of bourgeois M.P.'s there remains nothing but the joyless gaiety of their own individual resources. Travel is not much in their line. Paris is sought at the season of the year when no well-ordered Parisian is to be found in his own city, while the valleys and mountains of the Austrian Tyrol are sought just as people who are able to go to what is called Switzerland at the right moment are hurrying home again.

I shall have more to say of these worthy people, for, curious as it may seem, the more the social exclusiveness of the House of Commons is fined down, the less easy is it for them to make their way at St Stephen's.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE OFFICE OF MR SPEAKER.

It is not my purpose to constitute this chapter an elegy on Speakers of the past ; but the occupant of the chair exercises such an enormous abiding influence upon debate, and therefore upon the progress of the government of the nation, that he cannot be excluded from the New House of Commons.

We have had many Speakers necessarily, and their history is a long one ; but dealing alone with Speakers of mark, there is little doubt that the two who have left the deepest traces of their presence in the chair are Mr (now Lord) Peel and Mr William Court Gully, who promptly tried to be as strong and virile a Speaker as Mr Peel. He had also the impetus of honour to justify his selection by the somewhat small group of Liberals below the gangway who ran him against Mr Courtney and the prepossessions of the Front Bench. These cross-currents caused a good deal of stormy contention between the two wings of the party.

Many selfish things were uttered on both sides, but it is generally admitted that Mr Gully has confirmed the selection of the majority by his integrity, courtesy, firmness, and the other virtues usually paraded about a good man whom a great many former friends would not join on the same side of the street.

Lord Peel is the strongest Speaker the House of Commons has seen for two generations. He is one of the very strongest it has ever seen. His strength lay not a little in the fact that he had steadily emancipated himself from the throttling tradition that the Chairman is the servant of the House. He is appointed really to guide the Chamber. The Speaker, watching closely the dial of its temperament, has become something more than its guide. He has slowly, gently, genially, yet irresistibly, assumed a firmer footing still. He is now the master of the House.

Some years ago, after he had been appointed but a few months, and while the Irish party still disdained to own allegiance to any party in the House, Mr Peel's bearing aroused the suspicions of the gentlemen from Ireland. These were the days of constitutional skirmishing. Fighting motions fell upon Ministers like the manna at the feet of the children of Israel. Business was very much of a lottery, and no one could exactly foretell outside of the Nationalist ranks what would be the events of the night. There is no doubt that Mr Peel distressed

himself not a little at this time. There is a story told of a certain Earl of Lonsdale who, while staying at Lowther Castle, preferred his bedroom to his estate. His brother, entering the Earl's chamber one day when the sun was well in the meridian, said—

“Look here, it's too bad, the place is going to the devil;” and he narrated a series of shocking depravities on the part of the servants to prove that in a short time, unless its master roused himself, the estate would pass into the hands of the broker's man.

“My dear Cecil,” grunted the Earl, turning upon his side and with his face to the wall, while drawing up the clothes as if for another nap, “you should lie in bed as I do, and then you wouldn't see it.”

There were Speakers who closed their eyes to what was going on in the Chamber. In the words of Mark Twain, “They winked hard.” They very often slept soundly. But Mr Peel was like the Earl of Lonsdale's nervous, watchful kinsman, and the dislocation of business worked upon his sensitive organism until it produced a state of things which Mr Healy exactly hit off when, one afternoon, he loudly informed his colleagues, “The Speaker's again on the ‘pounce,’ boys.” The Speaker did sit literally upon the pounce. He would turn round towards the Irish angle of the Chamber, draw to the edge of his chair, place one hand upon his knee, and sit “at attention,” ready

to spring upon the transgressor at the moment of transgression.

Of course strong or abiding hatreds do not belong to the Irish nature. Imaginative tribes are quick to forgive. But a slight concession to sentiment will convert an Irish gentleman in a paroxysm of rage into a model of gentleness. The O'Grady in his loftiest moments of wrath was to be smoothed by the smell of devilled bones.

Mr Healy is naturally one of the gentlest of men, though the most saturnine of speakers. The irritation excited by the watchful alertness of the Speaker led to an impression that when Mr Peel came up for re-election to the chair he would be opposed by the Nationalists. But he escaped even a reproach, and to-day the memory of how he sat "on the pounce" is only recalled in the amusing graphicness of Mr Healy's figure of speech. But these incidents, as well as others which try the nerve of authority, were not lost upon the right hon. gentleman himself. They tended to harden his mind, to stiffen his self-consciousness. The fact that his authority had so often been put to severe test, coupled again to the recollection of the battles over the new Standing Orders; how one ex-Minister, for the sake of turning a point against a Minister opposite, would draw broadly coloured nocturnes, showing a Speaker armed with the new code, assuming lordly powers, and

using his powers or withholding them just as the humour suited them,—all this had its influence on his character.

Mr Lowe's objection to the working man as a voter was, that we should next have to educate "our masters." One side of the House objected to the closure because the Speaker might be the tool of the other side, while a middle section prophesied that he might not put the question when it was moved. Mr Gully has more than once bettered the instruction.

This consciousness of power has developed a benevolent despotism in the chair, with a tendency even towards sovereign sway. Mr Gully has been happily called the Kaiser of the Mother of Parliaments. There are two monarchs now in England—the Queen of the empire and the King of the Commonwealth.

The first gentleman to perform the office of Speaker was Sir Peter de Montfort; the first to execute the office under that title was Sir R. Hungerford, after whom the once famous bridge across the Thames at Charing Cross, and now astride the gorge at Clifton, is called. The duties of the Speaker are as various as they are important (see Erskine May). He presides over the deliberations of the House, and enforces the observance of all rules for preserving order in proceedings. He puts every question, and declares the determination of the House. As "mouth of the House," he communicates its resolutions to

the others, conveys its thanks, and expresses its censure, its reprimands, and its admonitions. He promulgates warrants to execute the orders of the House for the commitment of offenders, for the issue of writs for the attendance of witnesses, for the bringing up of prisoners in custody, and, in short, for giving effect to all orders which require the sanction of a legal form.

He is, in fact, the representative of the House itself in its powers, in its proceedings, and its dignity. When he enters or leaves the House the mace is borne before him by the Serjeant-at-Arms ; when he is in the chair, it is laid upon the table ; and at all times when the mace is not in the House it remains with the Speaker, and accompanies him upon all great occasions. In rank the Speaker takes precedence of all commoners, both by ancient custom and legislative declaration. The Act 1 of William and Mary, c. 21, enacts that the Lords Commissioners for the Great Seal, "not being peers, shall have and take place next after the peers of this realm and the Speaker of the House of Commons." Lord Colchester's Diary confirms this entry at Mr Pitt's funeral : " My place was after the eldest sons of viscounts, and before barons' sons."

Mr Gully has never been known to put the question either falteringly or irregularly. There was once an occupant of the chair who was so unnerved by having

to give his casting vote that he cried, “I am an ‘Ay’”; then, “No, no; I am a ‘No,’ I should say.” In the memorable division on the third reading of the Church Rates Abolition Bill, it is worth recalling the fact that there arose this complexity: Ayes, 274; Noes, 274. “A tie, a tie,” called the rival sides, and it was the duty of the Speaker to give the casting-vote, an incident remembered by Mr Gladstone as one enacted in breathless silence.

The formula in Elizabeth’s time regarding the first duty of a new House of Commons was thus expressed by the keeper of her conscience, the Lord Chancellor: “Go and assemble yourselves together, and elect one, a discreet, wise, and learned man, to be your Speaker.” Mr Gully is discreet, wise, and learned. He unites all these virtuous conditions. Peel showed discretion and wisdom when he washed his hands, like another Pontius Pilate, of a doubtful trouble. We allude to his refusal to have the vexed question of Mr Bradlaugh and his oath brought within his purview.

Lord Peel, to a certain extent, had early errors to condone. He is a model of that developed strength to which Mr Mellor doubtless aspired. He unquestionably used the closure very broadly; and in consenting to practically negative the whole Committee stage of the Crimes Bill he filled the Liberals with despair. He went out from the Liberal party

on the Home Rule Bill, and is now labelled under the parliamentary trade-mark as "L.U." signifying Liberal Unionist.

Mr Gully perhaps patented his method upon that of his distinguished predecessor. But he had a double motive really for this.

An eminent labour member, remarkable for the shrewdness of his observations, seeing the Speaker's procession pass through the lobby, said, with an emphasis of contempt, "That costs too much money."

The *cortège* consists of a messenger in silk "smalls" acting as footman in advance, the Sergeant-at-Arms with the mace, the Speaker in his wig and robe, the chaplain, and the Speaker's secretary. The price of this as an ornament of Parliament is £8000 a-year. It is one of the lighter sides of parliamentary life. Of course the labour cynic would be quite happy if the Speaker occupied the chair in a billycock hat and smoked a pipe, and if such things as a priest and a prayer-book had no place in the diurnal rubric of the meeting of the wise.

In fact, to his view, a Speaker in a billycock hat would be vastly more in harmony with the instincts of the proletariat. But any way, wig or hat, robe or jacket, pipe or not, the thing as it is and the thing as it might be represent the lighter side of parliamentary life.

The same hon. gentleman, *apropos* of its fighting and

obstructive instincts, seriously affirmed also that the House of Commons, to make its occupation conform strictly to its previous habits, might be let for glove-fights. Its *morale* would be raised considerably by the enforcement of the Queensberry rules in a Chamber which, he added, has witnessed perhaps more "hitting below the belt" than the veracious chronicles of the prize-ring have any account of.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HARD-LUCK.

THE letters M.P. have a charming sound, no doubt. Yet there is no life to which an Englishman can commit himself that is so trying as that of a politician. To a busy man, with an occupation outside of the House, it is a long course of petty worries, of a fight with patience. To a man of leisurely instincts it is full of irksome calls upon the discipline of repose. To a high-minded man it is full of disappointment. To a reformer it is a miserable charade of blanks.

There are, of course, hon. gentlemen who make a home at the House, for whom the Chamber, from early morning round to early morning again, affords meat, drink, and, in a sense, carriage exercise. These are veritably the ladybirds of public life. You enter the lobby, and find the place buzzing with the voices of many men, who are thinking not of the business which occupies the House, but of private affairs. It

may be early, and, in that case, the one word eddying above others, even when uttered in strictest confidence by some affected Don Juan anxious to secure a night off, is the word "pair." Or it may be late at night that a dozen of young embryo Premiers rush in, single out some old parliamentary hand, and ask if there are to be any divisions.

"Don't think there'll be any more to-night," replies the old parliamentary hand languidly.

"What? Have you had some divisions already?"

"Already! and this is 10.30. Why, my dear wanderer, we've had a regular run of them."

"Dash it all! and I out of it. My usual luck. When I'm in the road my luck is sure to be over the hedge!"

"Well, don't take on about it. Better make a point of staying here for the rest of the week."

"Oh, can't possibly do that. Have promised to join Kelly-Mickly's party at Henley, you know."

Here another M.P., very heated and very bronzed, hurries up.

"Any divisions going?" he asks.

"There have been."

"Deuce! How many?"

"Oh, twenty or so."

"No! Impossible! Horrible! And I—where the devil was I?"

"Well, something like it."

"Confound them ! And I'm so deuced low in the running. Thought I'd make a sacrifice of myself, and work up a few ! Ah, here's Billy Posts ! Where have you been since last blue moon ? "

"Did not know there had been a blue moon, but feel distinctly blue. For the cloak-room man tells me you've been having quite a mad gallop round the division lobby to-night. Is that so ? "

"Yes, quite true, alas ! true, true, my fair brother."

"Then I give it up ! I came from Taplow specially to make my pile to-night and clear off leeway, only to find the game's been played and the stakes are gone. How much longer is this ridiculous Government going to last ? "

"Oh, I hope a long, long time," replies a voice not heard before. It is that of Lord Cheyne. "I am going to the duchess's ball, and came round here at question-time to see Valentine Fullerton about a horse, and found myself in for such a carnival of divisions. Never had such luck. Quite a dozen fell to my book, so that I stand about equal with my zealous Radical neighbour in the next division."

Of course every man listens with a ~~sour~~ smile to this *blague* from one who is considered to hold a secure seat, proving that to him who has shall be given.

This thirst for divisions is due to a feverish convic-

tion that the votes a member gives during a session form the steps to the top of the poll at the ensuing general election. It is a superstition, of course, but no matter, it holds the field firmly.

This love of, and faith in, the electioneering value of a good division record find some support from that active class of professional or self-seeking M.P.'s known in Terrace locution as the Bounders of Parliament. The word "bounder," which has an American origin, is a synonym for pushfulness—one who thinks well of himself and his works, a person of energy who spreads himself out, is also to be seen when in a crowd and to be heard where there is a noise. Genius is not an essential condition of bounding, though the bounder is really a genius. He takes the floor, sweeps the deck, clears the table supported by nothing beyond a swinging, swaying self-assertiveness. The parliamentary bounder is a variety of the species which takes the form of rushing the House, rushing the Government, "rushing" even the party leader. The American commercial bounder is a man who just sweeps all before him. He goes down to Rangoon and buys up rice not in shiploads but in fleetfuls; he descends upon Yokohama and sweeps Japan of her art produce.

The parliamentary bounder is a man in a hurry. He is not a man of one idea, though no idealist. He

is, intellectually speaking, ubiquitous. All questions are alike to him, and he is the most prominent potentiality of each. Parliament in a sense exists for him, and he is the saviour of his country. He is difficult to handle, and, if a Liberal, causes the party Whip much embarrassment. But he must be brought into line somehow.

CHAPTER XIX.

HOW M.P.'S ARE "WHIPPED."

FOR my present purpose I shall take the official "whipping"-room of the Patronage Secretary. The business of the Whip is regulated by the business of the Government. This in its turn may not be decided upon until the House adjourns. Perhaps a bill or an estimate may be put down for the next day's sitting that requires a general call to arms, or perhaps it may be simply the continuation of an exciting debate which requires a "refresher." It is the theory of the Whip that he should be prepared for a division when least expected. He adheres, in fact, to the old French proverb that the only thing certain is the unexpected. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

But to go back a little. The business of the Government for the next day's sitting having been decided upon, and this decision carrying with it the complement of a party summons, there is a sudden

display of activity in the Whips' room. A circular is drawn, dated, and signed. This circular, called the "whip," is lithographed, a copy being addressed to every member of the party at his residence in town. For an hour after the House has risen at midnight all is bustle in the rooms of the Patronage Secretary. The last member has left the building, the lights in the lobby have been extinguished down to a single jet of gas, and all well-ordered M.P.'s are nodding their first sleep before the Whip and his clerical staff have discharged their obligations to the party leader.

The circulars being ready, seven Treasury messengers present themselves at the door of the room and receive the batch for distribution. The system of distribution is arranged upon the postal district system, though in this case the West-End practically approximates to the metropolis. At half-past seven the same morning the distribution begins, the delivery taking place by hand. Appended is a facsimile of the whip issued for the division on the second reading of the Home Rule Bill. There are several classes of whip. There is the "two-," "three-," "four-," and "five-line" whip. The line is drawn under the words, and indicates the scale of urgency. Five lines represent the maximum of earnestness. But of late it has become the custom to further accentuate the summons by drawing a deep black dash under the day and

date the whip is to be operative. Mr Marjoribanks (now Lord Tweedmouth) pushed his earnestness a step further, and accentuated his final Home Rule Bill summons by thick red lines. The following is this historic call to arms, and the reader will please imagine that the lines are in red ink:—

URGENT.

The division on the second reading of the Government of Ireland Bill will certainly be taken on Friday night, April 21st, when you are most earnestly requested to be in your place without fail.

E. MARJORIBANKS.

"It is rather a black affair," quoth a Radical knight of one of the Whip's deep mourning calls to arms.

The Whips' messengers are obdurate, their circular is an open sesame. They go armed with punitive authority. No member's door can be barred against them without the most serious consequences overtaking the hon. gentleman. A black quarter of an hour will await him in the room of the Whip. The object of personal delivery is twofold. An early hour is selected in order to reach the hon. gentleman before he has left his home. The messenger is instructed, if it is reported to him that the hon. gentleman is from home, to ascertain his whereabouts.

The distribution complete, the seven messengers return to Westminster and report themselves. Such is the nice regulation of the discipline that they are

expected to make their reports simultaneously by half past ten A.M. If there are no absentees, the whip is efficient; if there are absentees, and the matter is "urgent," these gentlemen are summoned by telegraph, or they must secure "pairs" with the other side. Although the Patronage Secretary does not return to his room at the House until business is resumed, he is seen by his dragoman. The post of Treasury messenger is a good one, and for simple duties the men employed upon this relatively "simple work are paid the salary of a captain in the army, or a head book-keeper in a City warehouse. It is the hours that kill, and it is a paradox perhaps often noticed that the House of Commons, which fixes by Act of Parliament the working hours in factories, &c., is itself one of the most notorious sweating dens.

The Whip has great powers within purely personal limits. He may, under the conditions of party servitude, resort to any measure for securing the attendance of an absentee. If such a step were necessary, he could snatch the bridegroom from his bride—nay, interrupt the nuptials themselves. Whips have been known to send the Court physician to the bedside of a sick M.P. to ascertain whether he might be brought down in his bed-clothes to vote. In an 1886 division a paralytic M.P. was brought down upon a mattress, carried in a furniture - van, and

wheeled into the lobby upon a trolley. Another, suffering from gout, was made up in a bath-chair, and in this form wheeled from St James's across the Park into the House, and, when the time came, through the wicket, through the division lobby, and out again, being delivered at his home without ever having left his chair. When he got home the hon. gentleman felt so much better that he ordered devilled bones and drank a bottle of port, and within a week was fighting manfully for the Union 280 miles from St Stephen's. Sir Edward Watkin voted against a bill while wheeled in a chair, and Mr Staveley Hill came all the way from his Canadian ranch in the North-West Territories to defend the Union. If the member for Walworth had lived in the time of Fox, his display of feeble heroism would have been worth the salary of a lordship of the Treasury. Such instances had a marketable price in those days.

The late Sir John Pope Hennessy indirectly won his first governorship, together with its complimentary knighthood, by undertaking to secure the absence of thirteen men whose presence in the division lobby would have proved fatal to the party. Sir John got them to dine with him in Dean's Yard, and plying them with wine that had had something in it, they were all asleep when the division-bell rang, with one exception, and he was found at two o'clock trying to let himself into Westminster Abbey with a latch key,

under the impression that the National Walhalla was his own house. Such, at least, is the story still current in ancient parliamentary circles to the glory of Pope Hennessy's resource.

When the Home Rule Bill was introduced by Mr Gladstone, a Government whip reached an hon. gentleman as he stepped ashore at Brindisi from the Bombay mail. His train was delayed by an accident, and he reached London just as the division was expected. He dressed in the train in the garb of the Senate House, and drove straight from Charing Cross to St Stephen's. This was literally from India to the division lobby. Sir George Elliot had quite a fancy for timing his arrival from Egypt so that he should walk from the train to the lobby.

There are records of M.P.'s bodies being seized for debt on the eve of a party division, and of the other side, armed with the Serjeant's warrant, breaking in the doors of the sponging-house to effect the timely rescue of the hon. gentlemen. Everything was fair in politics. Before Brixton became the resort of a bourgeois population, it was the residence of many peers and M.P.'s, with ill-lighted roads and open spaces. Here they would find their carriages upset while lumbering to Westminster. Political footpads plied their trade as far as what is now known as Kennington Green. To secure the attendance of a politically sick English Home Ruler, the Chief Whip

is said to have sent the then popular Lady Fanny to the hon. gentleman's wife, and this did it.

Either before Parliament assembles or soon after that event it is necessary for the Ministerial Whip to face the knotty problem of nightly reserves. Even assuming that the Nationalists agree to do the lion-and-the-lamb business on some Irish branch of policy, the Whip will have no right to claim the co-operation of these in favour of the general policy of the Leader. This is peculiarly so of a small Radical majority.

Hence in facing the question, How is the authority of the Treasury Bench to be sustained all along the line of a not too powerful majority? it will be necessary for the chief dragoman of the party to push his Irishmen, to the number of eighty-one, out of his calculations.

No Government Whip can possibly be happy otherwise. To make his position durable it is necessary that the Government of the day, whether a Unionist or a Liberal, should be independent of the Irish vote. If it be a Liberal Ministry, it must be independent of any "caves" that may, in a factional or a faddist sense, be made against it.

The calculation is based upon the Government majority, but relief is afforded from the possible vicissitudes of the "men of conscience" who sit opposite and dwell in "caves." There may, for instance, be an English "corner," a Welsh "corner," and there

may be half-a-dozen Scottish "corners." How does the Whip concerned purpose to get round these "corners"?

No general, it is a cardinal article of the philosophy of war, can afford to underrate the enemy, and a party Whip is always intelligent enough to act upon this principle. Mr Labouchere, Sir R. T. Reid, Sir W. Lawson, Mr Philip Stanhope, have been famous dwellers in "caves," and may cause much mischief to the nominal Whip of the Liberal party. They must, at all events, be put out of calculation when accounts have to be made up. When thus pressed on the one hand by a small majority, girded at from behind by a mischievous Nationalist party, and when niggled at on the other side by "cavests," it is necessary to mount guard. When the Speaker takes the chair it will be unsafe to go beyond the sound of the division-bell.

The physical exhaustion involved here is too great to need a word. It is not party service, it is party slavery.

It may happen, indeed, in such a case as we have just sketched, that the responsible Whip will have to forbid pairs altogether. I remember quite an instructive episode of the kind when it was the fate of the Liberals to be in power with a small working majority.

"Pairs!" Sir Donald Currie used to say. "We

don't want to pair with the Gladstonians. We can live very comfortably as we are."

"Two years ago," said Sir Cuthbert Quilter, "they boycotted us, and now it is our turn to measure out poetical justice!"

"And that with a very long spoon," laughs Mr Austen Chamberlain. "I am prepared personally to give up dinners, abjure theatres, sleep in my boots, and read nothing but Uncle Jesse's speeches."

* And yet it is the popular idea that a Government Whip is one who receives £2000 a-year to sit on a box and drive to Hurlingham and back.

Well, there is just this in the idea. The Whip meets with a good deal of "hurlingham."

Nevertheless in the darkest hour he must be radiant. Mutiny he will face with bland incredulity. He has to meet despair with a jest, and smile sweetly upon men who are bringing his Ministry to its grave.

CHAPTER XX.

THE LOBBY.

WE will now pass from men to matter.

Searchers after contemporary knowledge have been trained to look to the “lobby” for the inner, or unexplained, reason of things. But the thirsty drinkers of the filtered wisdom which, in the form of oracular paragraphs, moistens the leading pages of our morning dailies, must have been much perplexed over many a day’s draught. They must have been tempted to exclaim against the fountain of pretended Ministerial *communiques* as a thing that runs hot and cold at the same time.

Now, what, as a matter of fact, is this lobby? It is a small, lofty hall, with a tessellated pavement. It is embellished with pedestals without statuary, its floriated walls, after the manner of British taste in art, being coated with drab paint. In one corner is a refreshment-bar; in another corner is the post-office; at the bottom of one draughty passage is the room of

the Chief Ministerial Whip, which occupies a third corner; at the bottom of a still more windy gully is the room of the chief Opposition dragoman, but this apartment is not honoured with a corner, being only a kind of hole in the wall. The fourth corner is occupied by a gentleman in a chair, who sits guard at the foot of the Special Gallery staircase. A feature of this interesting pendant to the House, which, like Tennyson's tower—

“Stands four-square to all the winds that blow,”

is the multitude of its doors and ventilators. It is probably pierced with more doors than any other hall in town. These doors are so placed that they put a premium upon influenza. If one might see, the eye would be startled by a sort of battle-shield with the sword-points inverted, and in the form of cold air-shafts directed with malignant purpose upon the faithful senator. Both right and left of the door that admits to the library corridor is an iron grating, the which instinctively suggests a confessional-box for a blundering Minister. At the door opposite to this is where the minor Whips keep sentry upon the Ministerial army. Every private who leaves does so upon a promise to be in his place again by a certain hour. If he won't give this pledge, he must find a “pair”; if he cannot obtain a “pair,” he must stay where he is.

The lobby, naturally, is a place of noisy movement ; but it is seen at its best between the end of questions and the departure for dinner, and again between eleven o'clock and the hour of the adjournment. Now, the idea that the lobby is a fountain of wisdom, a well of knowledge, is both true and not true. The wisdom—or, to use a word better understood of the press and the reading public, the news—is there, but it does not get to the top ; or if it does get to the top, it does not get into the right hands. The people who know anything won't tell ; the people who would tell don't know anything. Ministers are curiously, though perhaps wisely, silent.

Nay, I have even heard that this spirit of secretiveness is carried so far that the head of one department will not take into his confidence the head of another department. They all avoid the lobby. The Whips are loyal to the spirit of the Cabinet. The minor members of the Administration obey the dictates of the Whips. In fact, vulgarly speaking, "Mum's the word." It is unnecessary to ask or speculate upon the question, "Is the lobby worth what it costs the newspapers ?" It is, any way, an amusing place, if only as a kaleidoscope of contradictory gossip. It has, however, been more amusing. It was more amusing twenty years ago.

Twenty, thirty, and fifty years ago they drank heavily. The age of Lawson had not come in. The

day of the lemon-squash and the goblet of barley-water had not dawned. Men drank of strong waters. Madeira was the favourite of the squire; now probably not half-a-dozen bottles of that beverage (I write under correction) are consumed in a year under the roof of the House of Commons.

I remember seeing Mr Disraeli cross the lobby when he intended speaking. He would order a bottle of port, drink half of it, and return to his place. This was thirty minutes or so before he had timed his rising. Then just at the fateful moment he tripped out and finished the bottle, and now he was primed for the contest. The epigram sparkled, the shaft flew swift and direct. It was under the warming exhilaration of a bottle of port that we had the famous "verbosity" speech, and the "shrieks-and-springs" picture of Mr Gladstone in a rage.

Mr Disraeli's yellow waistcoat, and bottle-green coat, and snuff-coloured trousers, however, are gone where many other interesting figures have gone. Mr Gladstone was seldom seen in the lobby. He was found at sea one night, steering for the room of Mr Akers-Douglas under the impression it was the way to Mr Arnold Morley's.

And *apropos* of an incident in the lobby, legislators make very poor reporters. They look at the most ordinary occurrences from the particular party side of the House at which they happen to sit. Thus

their recollection becomes strangely and miraculously blurred. It is another reading of the familiar complaint, "That is not exactly what I said, and is certainly not what I intended to say." A very striking example of the inability of members of Parliament to agree amongst themselves about an account of the same thing was afforded by the expulsion of Mr Bradlaugh from the lobby of the House of Commons.

Half-a-dozen hon. gentlemen having called the attention of the Speaker to the incident, proceeded as eyewitnesses to give a narrative of the proceedings. In each instance the story differed. Nobody seemed able to make up his mind whether Mr Bradlaugh had been roughly used, whether he had resisted, whether he had not himself invited attack, or whether the police had endeavoured to expel him or he had endeavoured to expel them. It is not wonderful if in this multitude of counsellors the Speaker should have confessed to an embarrassment of understanding of what actually occurred. It was the catastrophe inevitable to the impact of two extremes—the collision of the man of fact with the man of prejudice—the confusion of the observer who lost himself in the indignation of the angry partisan.

A very large number of members of the House of Commons keep up relations with the "gentlemen of the Press" for purely personal reasons. These are

political "log-rollers." They are men with motions to make or questions to ask.

"I am going to ask a question about so and so;" "I have a motion of which I shall give notice to-night;" or—

"It is my intention to ask for a return," &c.; or—

"We have decided to move the adjournment of the House to-morrow—you can say that I shall do it."

"You can say that I shall do it" is the key-expression which admits to the meaning of all the other political buttonholers.

"Have you heard what the Chancellor of the Exchequer intends to do about £1 notes?" asks the lobbyist.

"No, I have not heard, but I am going to preside at the meeting at St James's Hall about Disestablishment in Wales, and you can have the notes of my speech if you like."

These are the industries of the professional politician, the pemmican-maker.

Ministers and ex-Ministers now reserve their announcements for the table of the House of Commons. They like to be the heroes of their own epics. The late Government was an adept in the art of keeping a secret. The Cabinet has Cabinets within the Cabinet—that is to say, two or three men are responsible for this thing or that. The Ministers outside these coteries would regard it as

a breach of etiquette to inquire into what has not come before them as a whole. The result is that the Cabinet is broken up into a number of little Committees, the members of which are pledged to secrecy. But Ministers very frequently betray their own secrets unconsciously. At least much news is worked up as follows :—

A keen observer can often fix upon the topics discussed at a Cabinet Council by what follows the sitting. For instance, the public read that after the meeting the Chief Secretary, the Irish Lord Chancellor, and Mr Goschen remained in consultation. That at once justifies the quidnuncs in announcing that “Ministers at their meeting to-day had the Colonial Commonwealth Bill under discussion, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer is practically responsible for the financial part of the scheme.”

Or again: “Subsequently the First Lord of the Admiralty, the Secretary for War, and the Secretary to the Treasury walked across the Guards’ Quadrangle together. We understand that Ministers had before them a scheme of improved national defence.” And so on.

How a Minister may be “hoist with the petard” of his own inflexible reticence was shown in connection with a great Government measure of two or three years ago. He allowed himself to discuss with a Press gentleman in the lobby certain aspects

of a coming reform proposal. By a process of negative deductions the shrewd journalist built up a story so plausible that next day the right hon. gentleman fell upon his Under Secretary, and then attacked all his permanent officials, for having betrayed him.

"I swear," said the Minister, "that I have never revealed a single provision in my bill," which was of course technically true.

• I have glancingly alluded to the draught difficulty, and the question unsolved—Is it, or is it not, a question of ventilation, and what a metropolitan member, more vigorously than politely, called "messing about with the air"? No member is quite satisfied with the House of Commons.

All have their individual complaints.

The late Sir George Campbell's grievance was a want of more air. It was in deference to the demand of this salamander, supported by other salamanders, like Sir Richard Temple and Sir Henry Fletcher, that the lobby was scientifically reconstructed upon the principle of converting ventilation into draughts. The result is that if they were only the proper kind of "draughts," there are now sufficient to make Lambeth Walk happy all day long, and for all time. Close by the swing doors, gratings were let into the wall, through which blasts of cold air are pumped. The new refreshment-room is, perhaps, appropriately

the channel of a steady draught, which cannons against that coming out of the Tory Whips' entry ; this, in its turn, meets that emerging from the House, which is crossed by that from the members' entrance ; while rising from the floor are four columns projected by horizontal gratings, and descending from the roof is a veritable bayonet-like shield of sharp air-currents, let in by the open windows. The gay young Whips, on quiet nights in the House, are accustomed to place bits of paper over the gratings in the floor, in order to see them rise a couple of feet and spin like a teetotum.

Whether it be true in scientific detail, or merely an imaginative hypothesis, that in "washing the air," and then "filtering" it through cotton wool, the atmosphere is impaired to vitiation, need not be discussed. Mr Seymour Keay laid it down as an invulnerable doctrine of extremes, that if there be one thing to try the patience of hon. members more than the ruling of the Speaker in the nice question of "relevancy," it is the air of the inner chamber. Mr Seymour Keay is probably a good judge of airs. He has certainly given himself not a few. But the lobby is the most trying region in London, and only the fittest can survive here. Even the stalwart Mr Horsley has to admit that he occasionally feels "a clink of a pain," but he is too loyal to the palace to attribute the visitation to Sir George Campbell's

benevolent efforts to "purify" the lobby ; though his police would probably be able "a tale to unfold" if the First Commissioner of Works would lend them his ears, instead of sending Mr John Burns upon an inquisitorial expedition to the Reporters' Gallery to inquire into the ventilation, though what Mr Burns has to do with the ventilation of the House is a question which the Master of Works has possibly asked himself.

With a change of Government, upon the election of a new Parliament, the lobby undergoes certain changes. The Whips change offices, and perhaps also the First Commissioner of Works may move the refreshment-bar into the post-office, and put the post-office where the refreshment-bar had stood ; and the bill and vote offices may also be changed, and—all in the earth-hunger of Ministers for more room—other changes may be made. The inquisitive spirit of youth animates the distinguished gentlemen who play with the lobby.

I remember, and may recall, a singular instance of this refusal to let well alone. Mr Akers-Douglas, as chief Whip of the Conservative party, marched into his old quarters to find Mr Pike and the lobby post-office "located" there. Sir Wilfrid Lawson, in want of a half-penny postcard, goes to where he left the post-office in July, only to find himself brought face to face with drink-bottles. Ex-Ministers

are unable to find their Whips' room, which is now tenanted by the "other fellows." Finally, they are piloted up an alley where the janitors formerly passed to their suppers. Sir Albert Rollit is in search of Blue-Books, which Sir Henry Howorth, in a new hat, believes may be found in one of the towers. General Goldsworthy has heard that it is in one of the cellars; Sir Albert finds the room in neither of these retreats. Admiral Field, his arms filled with munitions of war against the new Board of Admiralty—the same consisting of old "Orders in Council" under which my Lords fight—is rumbling and blowing off steam, his sails "flat aback," his head "yawing" in uncertainty.

"Here," he groans, "have I been boxing the compass to find the needle," meaning that he has been searching for the Queen's printers.

Dr Tanner wants the water-but^t, which has vanished from its old corner.

There is a legend that Mr Thomas Bailey Potter, a very cumbersome member, having a bill to lodge, asked Mr Labouchere "where the office has been put now."

"Up there," says the member for Northampton, pointing to one of the little balconies at the summit of the lobby hard by the rafters.

"Dear me," says Mr T. B. P., "that is very high."

"Well, it's not easy of access," sententiously responds Mr Labouchere; "but I understand there is

a winding staircase such as you meet with in lighthouses or in watch-towers in old castles."

The new members add to the perplexities of the evolution which the lobby seems to be for ever passing through. But the truth is, Parliament is never very healthy, in spite of all it costs to make it sweet and wholesome. In the 1880 Parliament some one discovered a smell in the lobby, and this led to the redraining of the Speaker's court at an outlay of £13,000. Still the bad smell remained, until it came out that the kitchen-maid of one of the officials was in the habit of throwing her cabbage-water into an open sewer which ran under a wing of the lobby, and so bang went £13,000 hostage to a lazy abigail's cabbage-water. The scare whilst it lasted was moving.

Even the Press corps, a body of men famed for their cleanly habits, the sobriety, and regularity of their individual lives, begin with the resumption of each session to fade into sickness. The result is all round, that we have what may be called legislation in hospital and national government in the medicine-bottle.

CHAPTER XXI.

QUAINT TRIVIALITIES.

THE gilded "bauble" which lies across the table, and upon which Dr Kenealy, at a loss for a convenient resting-place, "hitched" his umbrella when he wanted all his hands for the oath, is verily the glorification of trifles. Until the mace has been removed from the table the Chairman of Committees may not enter his official seat. Millions might hang upon the omission of the Serjeant-at-arms to remove at the right moment this cherished emblem of authority to its ledge under the table. The very Budget itself would be stopped if the mace by some strange perversity of official ingenuity could not be got off the table, or if some democratic "citizen" of the time were to call for the presence of the Speaker.

Once upon a time one of the serjeants of that day omitted to return "the bauble" to the table when the Speaker, entering the chair, adjourned the House. Sir John Mowbray and Mr Courtney

were greatly scandalised, and privately insisted that the House had not been properly adjourned: But though the Speaker of the day himself was terribly shocked at this ~~incident~~, and unable to dine comfortably or serenely in consequence, the official was magnanimously permitted to eat in peace, to sleep not in the Clock Tower, and to retain his ears.

But it all proved a terrible shock to tradition ; and there is a legend that when the mace itself was placed upon "the table for the next day's sitting, the tail of the lion in the "boss" of "the bauble" was seen distinctly to lash three times in anger.

The House is expected to show the most profound respect to the mace. When the mace moves down the floor of the Chamber, carried across the shoulder of the First Serjeant, members must uncover their heads and make obeisance. If a stranger meet the mace in one of the corridors and omit to doff his cap, he is liable to be expelled the building. And some years ago, as I have, I think, mentioned, a Scottish Covenanting reporter, with strong ideas anent the semblance of idolatry, was relieved of his gallery ticket and banished the House for obdurately and contumeliously refusing to bare his head to the mace. He afterwards became a member of the American House of Representatives, and died ~~governor~~ of a State.

Apropos of bare heads, another quaint triviality,

amounting to a curious antithetical sarcasm. A member may not talk to another member without uncovering, but he ~~must~~, if he challenge the ruling of the Speaker, when the House or Committee is cleared, do so seated in his place, and with his head covered. Once Mr Gladstone found it necessary to interpose in the midst of a similar crisis, and being without his own hat, which he had left in his private room, he borrowed one, which happened to be of a very smart pattern, and several degrees too small for the Cesarean dimensions of the Leader's head. Once, too, Professor Fawcett, when he sat below the gangway, was unable to reach his own hat, and in desperate need he received the well-known pitman's Jim Crow of Mr Joseph Cowen. The effect was astonishing, electrical, memorable.

The officials of the House of Commons are very jealous of the restrictions of Parliament, which stand in odd contrast to the annual solemn assertion from the chair of the freedom of Parliament. But the restrictions synchronise with the privileges, since both were conceived in a feudal spirit of foreign exclusion. For the slightest breach of one of these unwritten usages of the place a licence—for all admittees are licensed and numbered, and “reasonably suspected” of harbouring fiendish purposes against the person of the Sovereign and her Parliament—is liable to be suspended.

These, however, are but pleasantries in the tyranny which survives at St Stephen's, chiefly a reminiscence of the days when it was a "breach of privilege" to report the proceedings of the House at all.

It may be mentioned incidentally that for many years, even in the present reign, tickets to the Strangers' Galleries were purchasable, and admissions were regulated upon the principle of first come first served. The contract, it is only just to explain, was surreptitious in its character; and a funny complement of the practice was the existence of loafers, one of whom for a consideration would keep the seat of an intending visitor until he was ready to occupy it. Surprise is frequently expressed at the presence, as early as 9 A.M., of people at the doors of a popular London theatre like the Lyceum or the Gaiety on the day of the production of a new piece. But there are men still alive who remember as they left the House at 4 A.M. on a summer morning, after a big debate, seeing a crowd of people outside of Westminster Hall, anxious to secure front seats for the close of the debate and the division. They carried baskets of provisions to support exhausted nature, and newspapers and books with which to while away the time until the opening of the House. This may appear to involve an incredible sacrifice of personal comfort, yet it differs but little from the experiences of political enthusiasts who, under the altered conditions of our own

time, go down to the House at 3 P.M., are unsuccessful in getting a place, and hang about the outer lobbies until midnight and the adjournment, in the hope of gaining admission through the departure of more fortunate holders of orders.

BOOK II.

THE LIGHT SIDE OF PARLIAMENT

CHAPTER XXII.

LOOKING BACK.

THE English Parliament had risen to the zenith of its fame when the general election of April 1880 ushered in a new test of political training.

Lord Beaconsfield had turned the corner of two decades, and though unfortunately now slipping sensibly from the magnificent position in which the country and his Sovereign regarded him, there existed no weakening of his extraordinary powers. The embodiment of the new Conservatism, he was surrounded by noblemen and gentlemen who had adopted the *régime* he had invented, as well as by younger men. Some of these had thrown themselves zealously into the new cult, and have since reached the higher positions under the Crown. There was everywhere a new Parliament with new ideas.

Mr Gladstone had reversed the edict of 1874, and had come back to power at the head of a majority which made him independent of the Conservatives

and of the Irish revolutionaries combined. Like Beaconsfield, as an orator, he had reached the highest pinnacle known to the forum. Mr Gladstone held the lamp of light over the world in a strong unfaltering grasp, and he had proved himself the greatest diffusionist known to any parliamentary system.

His immediate following at this time, it is interesting to note in connection with what ultimately befell the Liberal party, consisted of Sir William Harcourt, Lord Hartington, Lord Selborne, Sir Henry James, Mr Bright, the Duke of Argyll, Lord Rosebery, Mr W. E. Forster, Professor Fawcett, Sir Charles Dilke, and Mr Chamberlain himself, who, though the latest to join, was the first to disappear in the ever-to-be-remembered great disruption of six years later.

It is only of interest, in mentioning these things, to show in a few sentences what the Parliament was at the time we have chosen for this book, who led it, how great were its leaders, and how, as it seemed, varied and many and irresistible its potentialities.

The House of Commons itself entered in 1880 upon a distinctly new career, while retaining all its old traditional claims to exclusive authority, still mumbling and maundering over its sessional orders and standing privileges, the public estimate of it being that when one-third of the members slept, another third joined in the operation, and the last transacted the business of the country.

Again; with the Parliament of 1880 came a disposition to socialise the House of Commons, and this was done at a rate which made the House an annexe to Mayfair more, much more, than it had ever been.

Ministers demanded more room for the transaction of private business, which meant the entertainment between five and seven of their wives' friends. There was a busy time for many moons wasted. The architects in her Majesty's Offices of Works had their time occupied. The Terrace burst into bloom slowly. Seclusion being demanded for private dinner-parties, the kitchens were transformed into blocks A, B, and C, and so on. Baths and washhouses, shaving and hair-dressing saloons, were made for the accommodation of hon. members. The new Kitchen Committee, with instincts derived from a keen observation of their own butlers and their ways, laid on and "worked" afternoon teas, and altogether the House of Commons had daily to be taken into serious consideration by every lady fixing her engagements for the succeeding afternoon.

One of the readiest and most earnest to throw himself into this social political *régime* was the great septuagenarian himself. Mr Gladstone became the greatest entertainer in his private room as well as the greatest tea-drinker; and scarcely an afternoon came round that did not bring us some *bon-mot* that wriggled its course through the conflict of gossip which in those

days made lobbying one of the most delightful of chap-books.

Such is the past and the existence of to-day's House of Commons. It has not so much cut itself adrift from its traditions as it has submitted so greatly to the lightness and sweetness, the gaiety and the frippery, the scandal and the low-toned hues which make up the drama of rich, brilliant, and omnipotent London for three months every year.

Let me throw in daubs and splashes upon the white sheet—some of the forgotten, faded, or developed giants of the past.

I recall Mr W. E. Forster, rugged and leonine, with a grim smile, and the unkempt mane of the forest king, rumbling as he moved, loose-jointed and huge of frame, surging and lounging, no respecter of other men's corns, edging his way by lusty elbows, whose hands were habitually housed in their owner's pockets.

This was the man whom one part of the Liberal party said should be their leader.

It was this masterful spirit of straight unerring argument that Mr Chamberlain, prim, pale, *débonnaire*, oiled and brushed and nose-gayed, regarded as a danger ahead that must be removed, and accordingly he was removed.

Carlyle somewhere remarks that if we could only take the lid off the world, what should not we see? If the curious investigator were to take the roof off

the House of Commons, what a seething, turbulent, contentious, rivalrous crowd would he behold ! Men, for the most in black coats and top hats, struggling for good and for evil, wrestling and coquetting with angels of darkness and angels of light, animated by the loftiest purposes, which, by a strange perversity peculiar to all good and lofty purposes, are "atrocious" in one another's eyes.

It is the way ever of polities, and yet, as Mr Gladstone, to look back over the field of years, prettily and magnanimously assured the House of Commons, all policies are noble alike, breathing the best of intentions and harbouring the sincerest convictions individually.

The view is not, of course, quite new ; but coming from such an exalted quarter, it seems to breathe the spirit of charity all round anew. And still looking back, there you will see the Duke of Devonshire, sun-burnt and easy, having speech in the shadow of a statueless pediment of the lobby with the "Master of Birmingham," pale, alert, well dressed, and flowered in exotics, and a *Punch* artist making a thumb-nail sketch of both. That tall, willowy, young gentleman, dressed in soft rippling grey, gravely conning a little notebook through an eyeglass, is Mr Austen Chamberlain, son of the "Master," and will be joined admirably as Civil Lord to one of the Unionist Whips.

That handsome, black-bearded, smiling man in the frock coat, jauntily swinging his pencil at the end of a chain, is the affable Chief Whip of the then Ministerialists, Mr E. Marjoribanks, who has just brought off a division, and given Mr Gladstone a little majority.

The tall man there, with bowed head, who is biting his finger-nails meditatively, is the Chief Tory Whip, Mr Akers-Douglas. Captain Gossett has gone over to the majority, and Mr H. D. Erskine has replaced him as Serjeant-at-Arms.

Here comes Lord Randolph Churchill, walking with sleuth-like strides, his face pallid, so that his large grey eyes impart to it a spectral ambiguity. The little gentleman with one shoulder higher than the other, and a self-deprecatory expression, is member for Northampton, for whose body an amiable undertaker, with a hearse and the best intentions in the world, has just been making muffled inquiries across the way. Here we have Sir W. Harcourt, looking gravely over an expansive white waistcoat, as Mr Goschen shuffles by. Sir Wilfrid Lawson and the new Scottish baronet, Sir Charles Cameron, are laughing over one another's shoulders in "bardic" measure. That sturdy man in snuff grey is Joseph Arch; and that lively, Jack-Tar-looking individual, with the good-humoured face and the blue suit, is the "monarch of the masses," John Burns.

Lord Cross, when Sir Richard of that name and

Home Secretary, once spoke of a “lying spirit being abroad in the lobby.” The reflection had reference, of course, to the stories which, under the name of “news,” emanate from the lobby, and which are sometimes remarkable enough to suggest the pen of some political Baron Munchausen.

“The only statement in the paragraph to which the hon. member alludes that is true is the statement that the meeting was private.”

This paragraph professed to describe the doings of a deputation that waited upon the First Lord of the Treasury in his private room at the House of Commons. It is only fair to add, however, as a comment upon such amusing replies as this, that the *arrière pensée* is not unknown in the structure of the Ministerial answer. That some men know little of the world in which they live is shown in the instance of a present member, who sat in the House for fifteen years before he discovered the Terrace or found the vote office.

When I entered this political vortex Mr Chamberlain had not been born politically. Sir Charles Dilke, in the “cap of liberty” of the fancy satirist, was thundering below the gangway. Professor Fawcett sat inside the cross bench looking, as was habitual to him, through those sightless eyes as if in a perpetual desire to catch the eye of the Speaker—a tall, strong, erect, athletic man, with a powerful voice and

a monotonous delivery. Mr A. M. Sullivan had just fired his memorable shot at the head of the then Irish Solicitor-General : "If there is one melancholy spectacle in the House, Mr Speaker, more melancholy than another, it is that of an Irish lawyer masquerading as an English gentleman." Lord Randolph Churchill, then, as later, slight, pale, languid, and elegant, his long fingers toying with his moustache, sat on the second Conservative bench below the gangway, waiting, watching, thinking, dreaming, planning where Mr Hanbury later forged his thunderbolt discoveries respecting the maladministration of the army. Mr Arthur Balfour, who had been quite recently brought in, was suspected of ability, but not of the administrative qualities he has since revealed as a Minister. Mr Parnell was studying eloquence at the expense of his audience, and Mr Biggar had entered into a keen rivalry with Mr Tom Collins in moving counts. The age of the "gutter sparrows" was to come. Major O'Gorman's colossal form towered and broadened in the lobby, where he bewailed the weeding out of the "fine old Irish gentleman."

Later the wits of the lobby comprehended Mr. Labouchere, Mr Frank Lockwood, and Sir Wilfrid Lawson. There is a knot of journalists who are incubating a political *on dit*. That tall, lounging, reposeful man writing a telegram is the new Governor-General of Canada, Lord Aberdeen ; and

the other tall, straight set-up man, with glittering eyes and the distended red beard, is Lord Spencer. Passing through that door is Mrs Chamberlain, the newly wedded wife of Joseph, of that ilk, all pink and ripples, going to hear her husband charge a great morning paper with “gross breach of privilege.”

This tall, stately woman, in black satin and the wide “duchess” hat, is Lady Fanny Marjoribanks, the wife of a Whip and daughter of a duke (Marlborough). The rising hope of the Scottish Radicals, Mr Dalziel, who sacrificed a romantic moustache to a clearer enunciation, is forcing his way through a crowd; and Sir Donald Currie, with the sun of the South all over his usually pale face, is walking in from the Cape of Good Hope. He shakes hands with Lord Rowton. The air is laden with the sound of many voices, over and above the genial cachinnations of Sir J. W. Maclure. Sir Henry James, in a red necktie, is telling a story to the Prince of Wales, smiling, in French grey gloves; and the Duke of York is chattering to the Controller of the Household, Mr “Bobby” Spencer, in collars as high and stiff as a Waterloo stock. Mr Spencer, no longer “Masher of Parliament,” has reappeared in public life; his kinsman, the Red Earl, has been First Lord of the Admiralty, and is now amongst the great unemployed, which includes Sir William Harcourt, Lord Tweedmouth (“Teddy Marjoribanks”), the Fowlers,

the Morleys, Campbell-Bannerman, and the rest, who are all "out" now. Lord Randolph Churchill, who rose to the highest position in the Chamber—its Leader—is dead, and Mr Arthur Balfour, the youngest member—we may even say the "boy"—of the famous Fourth Party, whom all the House regarded as a kind of political joke, is now Leader, and imminently the Prime Minister. The changes in other respects have been many and dramatic.

Mr Chamberlain is now Secretary for the Colonies, and the "livest" member of the Government which replaced that of Lord Rosebery. His son, the tall, willowy young gentleman, is in the Administration—Civil Lord of the Admiralty—where he works like a draught-horse. Mr Edward Marjoribanks is a peer of the realm, a position which, in spite of the plague of Radicalism which professes to regard the Upper Chamber as unworthy of any decent man, he seems to like uncommonly well.

Mr Akers-Douglas has also given up whipping and "telling" in divisions, and is now our chief aedile, and responsible for our parks, palaces, and monuments. Sir Henry James is a peer, and has not abjured red ties. Mr Labouchere is on the side of the angels. Plunket, the orator of the House after Disraeli, has gone over to what poor Freddy Cavendish called the "better place above," the peerage, and as a peer occasionally looks down from their lordships' gallery upon

the arena of former triumphs. All these shadows and realities of the past have got on, for the reasons dealt with in an earlier chapter.

In its essential conditions the course of Parliament changes but little. Its procedure and its discipline—notably its discipline—are like the laws of the Medes and Persians ; only in its personal conditions does it change. But its procedure, happily, is being modified.

All the leading figures of the decade have moved either upward or downward. "T. W.," who used to stump the lobbies with his shoulders in his ears and his hands in his breeches, is now a Government man, who ingenuously strengthens his position by a timely revolt. "Sir Ellis," on the other hand, is "out," and there is reason to believe will remain in that sphere of breezy independence. What further changes Parliament is destined to effect we shall see soon enough.

For the present, at least, the change worked by need, expediency, fashion, and good taste in the House of Commons, which has turned legislation into one form of Hurlingham, and the House itself into a resort of society and a place which no boudoir can possibly overlook in the day's programme, is sufficiently startling.

CHAPTER XXIII.

GETTING A BILL THROUGH!

It has been well said that a little notoriety and a trifling measure of capacity will make a successful member of Parliament, and to Mr John Morley belongs the discovery that every Englishman is either actually or possibly a parliamentary candidate. Yet it is only a half truth to say that no politician or politician's family was ever advanced to the social sovereignty by the possession, through the head of the house, of Tom Robertson's magic letters "M.P." But the commercial value of a seat in the House I have fully established. Where the advantage breaks down socially is where the member's wife expects too much, or where the M.P. himself looks to do too much.

Sir Reginald Palgrave has well said that "before the House passes yearly every anxiety," and it is the discovery of these "anxieties" and their ventilation or emphasis in debate that makes the House one of the slowest of all known effective machines. The

Irish members of the Nationalist branch really import from Ireland a weekly dole of grievances, which, expressed into questions, keep the inquisition going until the next supply arrives. Occasionally, from one local cause or another, the basket of rotten eggs or decayed carrots does not reach Westminster, when even Irish imagination or Irish audacity is lacking in an O'Brien or a Swift MacNeill. But this misadventure is rarely to be recorded, and indeed the member for South Donegal has taken up, and handles with considerable skill, the "Imperial" topics by which Sir Ellis Ashmead Bartlett found fame in Herat.

The majestic tome of some 900 pages, known as Erskine May's 'Parliamentary Practice,' is in a sense the M.P.'s Bunyan. It marks the "Pilgrim's Progress" through the dark valleys of parliamentary life. But though he may read all this, and be able to either confound a Cabinet Minister on a point of order or triumph over it as the catechism of some local heckler, nothing actually secures a member in his seat.

He never knows really why or how he won his election, or how or why the other fellow lost. The only people who know are the electors; and it is wonderful, as well as whimsical, how the hero of this year may, for reasons equally inscrutable, find himself no longer the hero of his division.

No member is absolutely sure of re-election, and no man could pay court to a mistress more sedulously

than the most firmly established M.P. who has to study the moods and humours of his constituents.

He meets them twice a-year with a smile that covers but a whitened sepulchre, and the train that puffs him through the exit tunnel finds the hon. gentleman cracking his thumbs in the joy that "that is over."

He has perhaps sunk into that least interesting of all the biped creatures of the earth, a man of isms, when he adopts, under the compulsion of some noisy, narrow, or petty clique, one of the doctrines or the dogmas which Mr Bright inveighed against as the destruction of parliamentary independence. He very often finds himself perched, to his exceeding physical misery and mental demoralisation, upon that most unpleasant of all seats, the fence.

How to get a bill through involves something like the following measure and diversity of labour. We will take a Burials Bill. Find out what the Dissenters desire. Sketch your bill. Give it to the parliamentary draughtsman to finish. The parliamentary draughtsman will dispute provisions. Talk him into line with yourself. "Sweep the lobbies for backers—these are M.P.'s favourable to you. Then give notice of the bill.

Next ask leave to introduce it. Leave given; ballot for a night or a day for its second reading. Worry men who have a better place than yourself

to give you the best of their day. But the man of "isms" sticks to the best of his days with great tenacity. In the end you get second place. The happy day is approaching. But the Government in a moment of emergency seizes it. You must then go over the most difficult work again. Finally, you get another second-place day. Meantime you are bombarding the House with petitions. Deputations come up in favour of the bill and want entertaining at the House.

The day arrives, and you wonder if that first-place bill will never be got rid of. Perhaps there is a cabal of Ritualists who have resolved to talk you out. So they keep the debate going on the first bill. Eventually you are talked out. Still, like Bruce stimulated by the resolution of the spider, you try again.

A third day you are more fortunate. Your bill comes on. The Government talk "compromise." On this the second reading is agreed to. Next it is taken in Grand Committee. Then it returns to the House. Its report stage is put up, and before it ranges all the Government orders of the day. You sit sentinel night after night—dare not leave the House from a fear of the bill being called. When it is opposed one night, you set it up for the next night. In this way you pass a happy week.

Finally, you get on. The bill goes through. It is read a third time. It passes to the House of Lords.

Here it is snuffed out at once. So, loaded with anxiety, worry, and watchfulness, by go three months of the session.

The member who has tried it meets with sympathy, but some local Chadband says Mr Bunbury ought to have “squared the Lords.”

“Send me up,” he says, “and I’ll show you how to square the peerage.”

But Peddleton does not send up Chadband, and it gives Mr Bunbury his political funeral, buried under a cairn of his own Burials Bill. His place is taken by Mr Percy Flage, who promises everything, does nothing, but somehow keeps his seat. Mr Bunbury is heard of occasionally doing platform work; but he never again reaches St Stephen’s except as an ex-member, in a shabby hat, and wearing a forced smile. His old friends encourage him to try again, and then leave him with an “awfully busy,” or “so sorry, I’ve a lady on the Terrace.” Bunbury walks sadly away, and a spectre has withdrawn.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE FINANCIER IN POLITICS.

TIME was when the “interests” which in a sense ruled the House of Commons outside of the county influence was made up of the legal and the brewing interests.

An earlier age still, and Parliament lived practically for the army.

The “interests” to-day are extremely numerous. To the “beverage,” as Sir Wilfrid Lawson has it, there must be added the railway directors. Every railway corporation has its representative or representatives in the House of Commons. It is in a commercial sense the most powerful of all the “working” interests. Even Ministers are sensible of its power.

Another great conservative interest is in shipping. I speak of it as a conservative interest because we have seen shipowners change sides through the invasion of that particular interest. Mr Plimsoll owed

his famous outburst of "happy hysteria" to this sense of self-defence before all things.

Some years ago there was even a vinegar interest. A certain Liberal also added to brewing the distillation of brown vinegar, and left the Liberal party because Sir W. Harcourt's Licensing Bill was likely to put an embargo on malt vinegar, and so raise the cost of the London cockle to the consumer.

But to-day undoubtedly the biggest because the most vigorous and potential all-round interest is the financial interest, which now exacts homage in the House of Commons. The history of this interest is traceable to the Rand mines and to the speculation in "Kaffirs." Success is for the successful; and those chosen City wizards who held the magic rod became so popular in West End society that successful stockbrokers rose to be the most eligible personages in every boudoir of Mayfair. These gentlemen were popularly credited with holding the bag from which the chosen speculator might draw thousands. All you had to do was to make love to the right broker. Thus to be one of the chosen became the pursuit of the queen of every boudoir in Park Lane. It lasted for a brief time only did this passion for wealth by invisible means, but in the meantime the rulers of Capel Court had established themselves in Park Lane.

Lord Coleridge, treating of the authors of the war in

South Africa, attributed it to British patriots "who spoke the English language with a foreign accent." He meant, of course, the successful financiers of Bevis Marks. It would not now be easy to find at a short glance the first member of the auriferous interest to establish himself at Westminster. In an indirect way perhaps he stands in the person of Mr Cecil Rhodes, who is the spirit of the incarnation of parliamentary and West End speculation.

Betting is of course not unknown to the classic cloisters of the Legislature. I have certainly known of a distinguished man, later a great judge, who was accused of making entries for the Derby in the Central Hall. Why not?

We have also had various kinds of "sweeps." Indeed the House under successive parliaments has contained its sweeps.

But I do not mean these improperly. The sweeps were those valuable "pools" on the Derby and the Oaks, and Ascot. No other races were thought of, because Parliament usually does not sit when such "events" as Goodwood and Doncaster are pulled off. Even Goodwood, the last function of the dying London season, possesses little interest for the already depleted House of Commons.

But the financier with a palace in Park Lane and a suite of offices in Hatton Court is a very different person. Time was when he could not for the life of him

get into the House as a member. He had difficulty in reaching its lobby as a stranger. Now the financier beats all the rival "interests." The strongest in a numerical sense—the legal—is beaten upon its privileged grounds. He does "business" at the very back of the Speaker's chair; he is mixed up in promotion; and if a great railway corporation has a bill to put through, the first thing that its parliamentary agents do is secure a group of M.P.'s whose father is called Mammon.

Speculation is rife. I have in my mind the well-authenticated case of how £1000 was turned between the cloak-room and the entrance to the House at prayers.

Two members were hanging up their coats together. One incidentally mentioned a certain project whose shares were much "asked for."

"To oblige you," said one hon. gentleman, "I will let you have 1000 of mine own."

"Taken," said the other, and the transaction was booked.

On the heels of the chaplain the hon. member encountered a friend.

"Would you like some of sq-and-so?" he asked.

"Very much," was the reply. "At what?"

"So and so," which represented a pound advance on the transaction in the cloak-room.

"Good! book me for 1000."

Result, clear gain of £1000 between the cloak-room and the entrance to the House.

This kind of thing does not mark the exception but the rule. The methods are the same though the results may differ. Sometimes the prize is small, sometimes the loss is quick and swift upon the rise. But the financial M.P. bitten is not within the limits of Capel Court ethics in crying out. So he grins and talks "and nurses only his revenge."

Many of the financiers are good fellows and give good dinners. Epicureanism and an inability to speak the English language without a foreign accent go together at the House of Commons.

Good things are going when the financial members are about. It is just as well to know a gentleman whose hat shines with an air purer than is to be got in the corridors of the London mining market.

Know these gentlemen at any cost.

There is every likelihood of the financial invasion of the House of Commons increasing. You may know a stockbroker by his attire. He dresses better than the lawyers, of course, and runs the cadets of noble houses very close in everything but style. That may come some day.

Meantime it is wonderful how a duchess will smile upon a new acquaintance when as an aside she learns that he is "in the City."

CHAPTER XXV.

THE GAIETIES OF IT.

SOME one once wrote of the Treasury Bench—of more rugged days :—

“ No satin covering decks the unsightly boards,
No velvet cushion holds the youthful lords ;
And claim illustrious Tails such small regard ?
Ah, Tails too tender for a seat so hard !”

Now there is no bench in all the Chamber, nor in any house in England, so soft and sweet to the senses. But this cryptic homily upon the Government bench reminds me of some queer stories of M.P.’s themselves. One day Mr Johnston, M.P. for South Belfast, asked Mr Gladstone if, in view of the great heat of the weather, he would withdraw the Home Rule Bill.

Humour sometimes exists in antitheses, and Mr Johnston added to the humour of his antitheses by his own appearance, which was that of the patriarchs —Job in the hour of his agony preferred as an example. Some years ago a Scottish visitor not then

in the House was so overcome "by the sun" that he fell at the feet of the buffet in the members' lobby, which caused Sir Wilfrid Lawson to sigh, "Ah ! stands Scotland where it did ?"

While Secretary for Ireland, Mr Balfour one day found himself dining out in Dublin. He got into conversation with one of his fellow-guests, the humorous Father Healy, and took occasion to ask, "Do the Irish really hate me as much as their newspapers say?" "My dear sir," replied the priest, "if they only hated the devil half as much as they hate you, my occupation would be gone." According to the accounts of his friends, Sir Henry Fowler lives in dodging catarrh. He would as soon think of voting Tory as of sitting outside of a carriage.

Mr Gladstone, according to another legend, could not, as Mrs Gamp would say, "abear" condiments. Pepper made him irritable, mustard put him into a fever, and vinegar gave him insomnia.

Sir William Harcourt contested his first seat in Kirkealdy and lost, but on leaving he was presented with a piece of plate, which drew from him the remark that "he was the first Saxon who ever brought bullion out of Scotland."

When Mr Gladstone insisted upon making Mr Henry James a knight, in order to maintain the respectability of the honour, Sir William is reported to have said, "But, sir, why not knight yourself ?"

If the House of Commons may still be regarded as the finest club in Europe, the opening of Parliament by the Queen in person is beyond what Mr Gladstone has called "all shadow of a question of a doubt" a pretty spectacle. I have witnessed some historic gatherings, and have assisted at some brilliant functions, which embrace a great durbar in India, the apotheosis of Victor Hugo, and, I may add, of Cardinal Newman, the Jubilee ceremony in Westminster Abbey, the State performance at Covent Garden Theatre and the civic banquet at Guildhall, both of them in honour of the visit of the Emperor William to London, the coronation of the Emperor himself, the marriage of the Duke of Albany, the interment of the Czar Alexander; but of all these stately pageants, that which such masters of stagecraft, wizards of harmonious grouping, and superb majesty of movement as Sir Henry Irving and Sir Augustus Harris would revel in reproducing is the magnificent spectacle which I place at the head of the moving shows of the earth.

The House of Lords lends itself naturally to what is required of it. "It is warmed by a sumptuousness of crimson upholstery and gilding which does something to relieve the cold cynicism of Lord Salisbury's logic and to brighten the gloom of Lord Wemyss's pessimism. Such a scene as that which environed the admission of Prince George of Wales in his

character of a peer of the realm became it as it certainly would not have become the sombre austerity of the House of Commons. When the tall form of Lord Arthur Hill, clad in his uniform as Controller of the Queen's Household, was seen at the Commons' Bar, it struck across the sense of congruity as the presence of a soldier would at a Quaker funeral. Again, upon the rising of the hon. gentleman detailed to move the Address in reply to the gracious Speech from the Throne, clad in the gay habiliments of the yeomanry or of a deputy lieutenant, members are disposed to laugh. But in the House of Lords nothing seems incongruous, unless it be the Speaker and a dozen of the faithful Commons standing in deferential attitude at its emblazoned bar.

I am old enough as a Parliamentary hand to remember seeing Mr Disraeli drinking, as a prelude to a big speech, a pint of port wine at the buffet in the Commons' lobby, dressed in a green coat, a buff waistcoat, and snuff-coloured trousers. And ten years later I remember him as Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield, in evening dress, and with much theatricalism of deportment, addressing a stage speech to the Chamber which he had, as a needy novelist, promised to teach oratory. In the side galleries sat many peeresses of the realm, who had driven down to the Chamber after dinner to listen to the most graceful speaker of his age. It was just the scene to move the soul of this

oriental dreamer—beauty and lineage, and diamonds and gay apparel. And I remember how with supreme art he would close his peroration with a strange movement of his dress-coat tails, which was half a flick of defiance at the astonished statesmen opposite, and half—with perhaps a little more than half—of an artfully executed desire to show us that these same tails were lined with richest of pale rose silk. These were “field-nights” in the Lords in full dress. The bottle-green coat had long ago gone to its shelf, but the buff waistcoat and snuff-coloured trousers remained almost down to the day of his last walk from Whitehall Gardens with the faithful private secretary he had ennobled.

The House of Lords has lost some of its interest, mainly because of the increasingly parochial character of the legislation initiated in “another place.” It has always been emphatically impressionable upon foreign policy, and it wants something more than a scuttle out of Egypt to fill its benches and spray its side balconies with peeresses. The Queen has opened Parliament perhaps for the last time. It is not now so certain, or constructively certain, as it was even two months ago, that their lordships will, under a new theory of international give-and-take, have to stand between the empire and Foreign Office imbecility.

In the meantime, whatever colour is imparted to their lordships’ proceedings is obtained almost ex-

clusively from the brief parading of a new peer. This is a ceremonial which sometimes draws society to Westminster. My recollection carries me back to the induction of Lord Beaconsfield, a strange and moving spectacle of a lean and stooping form, from which his peer's robes of crimson and ermine fell in attenuated folds, and cast into the pallor of death the sphinx-like lineaments above. Odd, passing odd it was, when the etiquette of the ceremony obliged the new peer to place upon his head the strange three-cornered black hat, in shape a survival apparently of Dick Turpin and the Chevaliers of the road. The spectacle of that passing "make-up" will never be effaced from the recollection ; and there is, perhaps, a reasonable measure of foundation for the legend that Dizzy himself was so impressed with the incongruity of the effect, that on passing an open window to disrobe he threw that uncanny and uncouth headdress into the Thames.

Another memorable induction also was that of Lord Tennyson. The Poet Laureate resembled one of the mourners round the bier of his own dead Arthur. The long, unkept beard and shaggy mane threw into shadow the tragic sorrow-stained face of England's famous bard, and so overpowering became the prevalent depression that the ennoblement of Mr Tennyson passed instinctively into the illusion of the "*Morte d'Alfred*." Very different was the sprightly pretty movement and address of "Our only General," or yet

the finikin, brief, quarter-deck strut of Sir Beauchamp Seymour when the "Swell of the Ocean" took the oath and his seat as Baron Alcester. But the record of the impressive dignity of the ceremony was ludicrously cut by the comic suggestion of Mr Toole "in a new part," when Lord Halsbury paraded for the first time in his robes as Lord Chancellor. "That hat" over the broad rubicund face of Hardinge Giffard, Baron Halsbury, had exactly the converse of the effect produced when it fell over the ears of the great Premier.

Princes have, of course, a way of their own in supporting themselves on State occasions. But though Garter King-at-Arms and the Lord Great Chamberlain are from their position veritable Masters of the Ceremonies, they are liable to maze when handling the cherished persons of princes. The lions in gold thread which sprawl upon a red ground over the tabard, or jerkin-like jacket, of Garter King-at-Arms may conceivably embarrass the Prince of Wales, though they would only fire the sportive instincts of Lord Randolph Churchill. But certain it is that the manner in which the Prince of Wales cannoned against the Duke of Connaught, and the Duke of York knocked up against his uncle, makes it almost a duty of the authorities to have these royal inductions hereafter "stage-managed" by Mr Tree or Sir Henry Irving.

CHAPTER XXVI.

CONCERNING PAIRS AND PAIRING.

PAIRING is a modern invention. Thirty or forty years ago it was unknown. Members were compelled to dine at the House because majorities were small, and divisions led sometimes to tight places. If a member desired absence, he had to ask for leave, and the permission was accorded only after "question put."

Cases of life or death alone provided the justification. Then the member was permitted to find a pair—that is, a member of the other side—so that each should equalise the other in a division by being respectively absent. Members who went home to dinner were only allowed an hour, no matter what the distance.

Now pairing is one of the first of the duties which each member feels he owes to himself and his friends.

"I want just ten divisions to make my record.

When I get them I shall pair for a fortnight, and then complete my service out of the Paddies, who are sure to give us a romp before long."

After all, what's in a division? It is superficially, of course, a test of 'attention to business. Yet it only proves that divisions have taken place. There may, on the other hand, be no divisions for a week, and what evidence has the gentle constituent that the worthy member for Bunbury is at the post of duty?

For the most part the divisions are irrelevant—a form of parliamentary licentiousness on the part of him who forces them. They establish no principle, realise nothing but twenty or thirty minutes' waste of time, and conform in reality to a legal form of obstruction.

There are two hon. members who have sat for the same constituency. They are rivals in the division lobby. They run neck and neck. One watches for the presence of the other. They pair so that neither shall score over the other, oblivious of the fact that when both are absent the constituency is unrepresented for the time being.

When Mr Joseph Walton—better known as Chinese Walton—decided to visit China and report upon England's position in the Far East, he paired, and received the following rhythmical send-off from Sir Wilfrid Lawson:—

"The session is waning, and what must I do ?
 I will pack up my traps and be off to Chee-foo.
 Ere the long days of summer in England set in,
 I will travel away and set up at Pekin.
 This country is dull and extremely absurd ;
 To the Land of the Pigtail I'll fly like a bird.
 Let Harcourt and Morley and Bannerman prate,
 I'm sick of the House and the weary debate.
 With some nice mandarin in the Flowery Land
 I'll be taking—ere two months are over—my stand.
 There, pleasure and duty so sweetly combining,
 On birds' nests and dogs I shall find myself dining.
 So, hey ! for the East, and, old England, adieu !
 I'm off like a bird, I'm off to Chee-foo."

Some accidents have happened through the Whips not being careful to establish pairs. On one occasion a new Conservative Government was nearly being "thrown" on the Ascot day by allowing too many of its young men to be absent.

It is well known that Lord Rosebery's Administration fell in 1895 through a similar act of carelessness on the part of the Whips. Either five or seven occupants of the Treasury Bench were unable to account for themselves in the division on the cordite vote.

Mr Gladstone when Premier was very particular about his divisions. He lived from 1892 to 1893-94 from hand to mouth in a majority sense, yet he achieved the paradoxical feat of keeping the session going for fourteen months. Mr Gladstone would

bestow as much thought and attention upon a legislative flea as upon a legislative elephant.

To a great number of legislators the pair is an abomination. It is an abomination to be obliged to leave this best form of earthly Paradise ; for to a vast number the session is Paradise, and the prorogation is a casting of them forth.

"It is the finest place on earth," I have heard one member say.

"I would not be out of it for all the hair on my head," rejoined another, who is bald.

These gentlemen get out of the House as nearly as possible all the money they put into it.

Mr Healy once described the Speaker as a person who "sits in a wig and draws £5000 a-year for bawling 'Order !' I would cry 'Order' most beautifully for half the money."

The cheapest chop-house in town, it becomes to the Nationalist the incarnation of the worst phase of his dear separation. In fact, separation thus may be obtained at too high a price.

What will Sir Charles Dilke do when Parliament is up ? What does he ever do -- that wonderful embodiment of the steam-engine in the human frame ; that tireless, impetuous, eager, purposeful legislator and administrator, who might be the concentration of all the responsibilities of Govern-

ment? Sir Charles has never paired, and so has rarely been seen absent from his place.

The views in which the House is held differ materially.

I remember that the late Mr Joseph Cowen, when he sat at Westminster, declared emphatically that the House of Commons demoralised any man who failed or neglected to mount strong guard upon himself. Mr Cowen went on to say that he should give up parliamentary life to save himself from himself. It was no place for any self-respecting citizen.

Mr Augustine Birrell is credited with the declaration: "I can neither think nor read in the House of Commons. Its moral atmosphere is fatal to thinking and reading."

I have spoken of pairing as a modern invention, which in my view it is. No doubt it existed as a device, a way out, fifty years ago: it was not the rule, but the exception. Now whips are employed for some time daily upon nothing else.

CHAPTER XXVII.

DINING AT THE HOUSE.

“ROLL up the map of Europe,” Pitt is declared to have whispered, in husky tones, at the moment of Death’s approach; but an amusing annotator has placed it on record that what the famous statesman really uttered was a request for one of Bellamy’s pies.

“Bring me quickly,” he said, “ere I die, one of good Mr Bellamy’s pies.”

Of course the story is but a half truth; though when one thinks of Brougham at seventy drinking two bottles of port at dinner, going to bed upon a half bottle of “peat-reek” (whisky), and turning out at daylight to shoot teal; when we recollect how Lord Lyndhurst at ninety supped off hot boiled lobster and champagne; and when we think of Sir Henry James taking up covert-shooting at fifty, and winging where so practised a hand as “The Prince” misses,—there is nothing so wonderful in Pitt asking to die on a savoury “pie.”

Bellamy was the father of parliamentary restaurateurs. He it was who first rendered it possible for members of the House of Commons to dine at Westminster. Before Bellamy's time senators, afraid of the ride home, "pecked" at the coffee-houses with which the rookeries of Westminster abounded. Westminster in Pitt's time was very different from the Westminster of to-day. New Palace Yard had no existence. Old Palace Yard was what it is to-day, barring that we have the present stately fane, as compared with the old palace which Turner saw burn from Westminster Bridge. Thieves herded under Poet's Corner of the Abbey; and where the tall gilt-headed palisades separate Bridge Street from Rufus's Hall stood a row of disreputable habitations, which sheltered strumpets and pimps and bullies, and on the one side gave egress to swashbucklers who hung their windows with frowsy linen and wearing apparel rinsed from the stains of last night's orgie or bout in highway robbery in what is now the Birdcage Walk, or derived from the tell-tale remnants of the latest murder itself.

Members of Parliament who to-day plan and scheme and *kow-tow* to successful placemen, and waste their energies in preaching equivocal propagandas, and in adopting the cult of this and that club and sect and faction, passing their days upon back staircases and their nights upon rude platforms in ruder meeting-

halls, were in those days mere voting machines. Sufficient unto the day was the debate or division of the night. They played and “rooked” one another, or were “rooked” at the coffee-houses in or about Piccadilly, and thence they sallied forth in knots of three or four to keep off the footpads that lay in their path to the House. Or they sallied hot from their punch to the Cocoa-nut Tree. As late as the days of Mr Mundella members formed bands of passage through the Birdcage Walk. The debates in earlier days *were* debates, and the divisions seldom came off before three or four in the morning. The age of the carpet-bagger had not come in, and the professional politician scarcely found an existence in Westminster. The debates of the House were reported from thumbnail notes ; and a legislator, so far from stumping the lobbies distributing paragraphs about himself from his waistcoat-pocket, was instinctively inclined to resent, after a physical fashion common to the time, an allusion to his personal doings, his votes, or his proposals at the House.

It is true that in the eighteenth century votes were not of more value to Ministers and ex-Ministers than they are to-day ; but they were used to a somewhat different purpose. It was in those days men more than measures ; the intrigues of those who, being “in,” did not wish to be turned “out,” and of those who, being “out,” were ready to sell their souls,

and certainly did jeopardise their credit, to get "in." Then, perhaps, more than now, every man had his price, and the picture of Charles James Fox, of the Pay Office, sitting behind a screen, with scores of honourable gentlemen coming up in discreet isolation, selling votes at £200 per vote, and paying out guineas as the wages of infamy—£25,000 going in one morning—and of Lord Bute, familiarly known as "Jack Boot," doing much the same sort of thing behind an arras in a two-pair back, sufficiently illustrated the character of the corrupt practices of the 'Seventies.

That was indeed the age for the professional politician. When we think of the time in which the king found it necessary to send a pursuivant of arms to bring members to the performance of their parliamentary duties, and when we compare the unwillingness of those days to serve the Sovereign at Westminster with the later readiness of men to pawn their very wives for a seat, the change in the humour of man becomes strange indeed.

But with the age of wheeled vehicles, or rather with the "gridironing" of the country by railroads, Parliament became the fashion, as it had been the interest of the barons to load the Chamber with their own nominees.* The peppery threat of the duke, who vowed as a retaliation that, "Damme, sir, I'll send my butler as your member," is an interesting illustration of the "differentiated"

power of the patrons of two centuries ago and the “good old days” of the pocket boroughs. Scions of noble houses and accommodating squires were sent to Westminster as the nominees of this and that belted earl. Wealthy and without employment, men used “the House” as a resort of roisterers, and as an alternative to the murky excitement of Crockford’s and the “hells” of St James’s. Fortunes were pledged upon the hazard of the poll, and indeed there sit, even in these days of calculating enlightenment, the sons of a house which in some twenty years, in the days before household suffrage, the ballot, and the enactment against bribery, expended in contested elections from £100,000 to £150,000.

Mr Fox has long ago gone over to the majority, which he sometimes paid to create and sometimes to annihilate ; and “Jack Boot,” silent and muffled, has stepped from his arras to the grave.

But in the days of Pitt and Bellamy London was filled with very rich people and with extremely poor people, with an exceptionally large number of rogues, and with an ineffective middle class. The rogues held the taverns and the coffee-houses—broken-down men of fashion many of them—and by these professional gamblers, cheats, and demireps, as Sir George Trevelyan has told us, the young gentlemen of property, on coming up to town for the first time,

were regarded very much as the butcher regards the calf he is about to slay for its weight value. The squire ennobled to the possession of an M.P.-ship at a cost of £10,000 was here, and it was into the old House of Commons, with its beetling galleries and its deep-set, frowning windows, and its prevalent gloom and general air of frowsy insufficiency, that the faithful Commons of a century ago were carried from their homes in Leicester Square, Warwick Street, and the purlieus of Piccadilly, in glass coaches or sedan-chairs, lit by linkmen and guarded by their foot-servants.

The House opened as it does now, or rather till recently used to do. But it was not until midnight that the Chamber became alive with members. Many of these had "dined not wisely but too well"; others were intoxicated with the success of the gaming-tables; others were maddened and driven to desperation by their ill-luck. Men dined at home, or in what passed then as the clubs of the day. There was consequently no demand for the elaborated system of refreshment that prevails nowadays at the House of Commons. For some generations, indeed —such was the ultra-utilitarian age, its curious want of the skilled worship of luxury, its singular un-readiness to devise ends to the means at command —it had been impossible to obtain a single sandwich under the roof of the House. Various attempts, sug-

gested by the cultivation of the art of luxury, to administer to the creature comforts of the Senate there had been. But it was not until the coming of Mr Bellamy that the idea of feeding the House was seriously considered, and, as I have said, it was one of Mr Bellamy's renowned pies that set the mouth of the great statesman watering at the moment of his dissolution. Bellamy's pies have opened up a vista of past interest in the history of this strange legislative corporation which has carried my thoughts backwards, instead of forward to the proud achievements in gastronomy of the modern Kitchen Committee.

The Kitchen Committee which now feeds the House is a band of members chosen to look after the refreshment of hon. colleagues exhausted by debate, and to fortify others to bear their guerdon in the arena of rhetoric and battle. It is not an ancient institution, though it is a distinct monument of voluntary industry, enterprise, foresight, and with a keen eye for the main chance.

But the chairman really is its most puissant force. The chairman is, in fact, the Kitchen Committee. He is a nobleman usually. His word is law ; his frown distils terror ; his anger shakes all alike ; his declaration, "I will resign," threatens to place the House in the awful and imminent danger of having its commissariat paralysed, its supplies cut off, the butcher and the baker sent full-handed away, and

to cause the fearsome cry to go round, “There’s mutiny in the kitchen, and dinner’s ‘off’ !”

The Kitchen Committee goes out with the Government of the day. It is the exclusive pleasure of a new House to appoint its Kitchen Committee. The chief is chosen from the party that has come into power.

Well, the House of Commons for years put up with beef-pies, mutton-chops, and steaks. It was a beef-steak and a bottle-of-wine age. They were giants in those days. It was as fashionable to be drunk as it is now fashionable to be sober. There is no offence greater to society to-day, and nothing more prejudicial to the interests of a young man of Mayfair, than to be caught ill-favoured of wine. Again, 'tis well that 'tis so. Equally, as a swearing age, we have improved upon the manners of our ancestors. But with a taste for French dishes and made *entrées* there has come in a taste for a lower morality, which is expressed in the Newgate Calendar at the right estimate, but is known in the ethics of the West as the “crime of being found out.”

But to return to our meat—to our cutlets—before Queen Victoria was sovereign. There was no Kitchen Committee at the House of Commons when Pitt was Premier, or Brinsley Sheridan, reviled by a friend who found the lessee-statesman in a public-house while Drury Lane Theatre was in flames hard by, retorted, “ Well, can’t a man drink his bottle of wine by his

own fireside?" Indeed the House did not enjoy a kitchen at all. There was a big frying-pan with a grate in Westminster Hall, just under the spot where it was humanely decided to relieve Charles Stuart of a head that he had used so badly, and here chops and steaks were broiled in a lake of bubbling fat, Seven Dials fashion.

But members and Peers, all alike slaves to the witching conqueror — Hunger — ate and drank and caroused two and three bottle deep. Beef-steak and a pint of port wine made a king's supper in those days, as much enjoyed by the "finest gentleman in Europe" as the late Emperor William enjoyed a supper of boiled lobster served hot. There are no members now alive, since the death of that nonagenarian Charles Pelham Villiers, who could recall the near shadow of the immortal Bellamy-pie *régime* at Westminster. But many "old parliamentary hands" insist that the age of the steak and the chop, with the pint of port or madeira, is much to be preferred to the age of the French dish and the bottle of "Polly." Of these, Mr (now Lord) Heneage is one, who, speaking to the writer, said, "Beshrew me the Kitchen Committee, and their biliary messes concealed in bad French. Give me a grill washed down with soda-and-whisky."

The Kitchen Committee, which threatened just before the 1899 Whitsuntide adjournment to "go out"

in a revolt, came in upon one. Lordly fashions declared against the age of the pie and the cutlet. Hon. members, greatly daring, would go to Paris and dine at Bignon's. They came back with impaired digestion and clamoured for "made dishes." The purveyor to the Legislature revolted, and the Kitchen Committee came in with a policy, turning like a good old-fashioned joint upon the almost forgotten "spit." It was a policy of made dishes. M.P.'s went in for mysterious messes, under the aristocratic guidance of Mr Sidney Herbert, now the Earl of Pembroke; and with impaired digestion there naturally followed what, in the political euphemism of the time, came to be known as Obstruction. Mr Joseph Gillis Biggar, in order to allay the hydra of Obstruction, was invited to join the Committee. He did join. He made a gallant bid for the supremacy of the joint, and was encouraged by the fact of it being the age of the labour member, with a liberal "trade" allowance and an appetite in proportion.

Mr Biggar, indeed, had made it so "hot for the joint," by deriding the thinness of the slices served to hon. members, that this in part led to the inclusion of the member for Cavan in the "Cabinet" of the kitchen. Then Mr Biggar encouraged a larger cut from the joint concurrently with a more moderate scale of charges. Mr Sidney Herbert, growing bold, added soup to his policy, and a great cackling arising,

and blending, not inharmoniously, with the cackling on the main floor of the palace, showed that the Kitchen Committee had taken the bolder course of introducing winged beasts and the establishment of a six-course dinner as a triumph of the proverbial three courses of a more modest epoch in parliamentary gastronomy.

And here we obtained, established our first six-course dinner at the House, and to that hon. members may now cheerfully bring their sensitive appetites. It is a dinner quite up to that of one of the big restaurants. Gentlemen desiring to play epicure may order special plats, and do. Thus are ladies and their friends entertained at "the House" as well as they would be in the palace of Lucullus himself. In the fine nights of the summer solstice dinner is followed by a walk on the Terrace or coffee at one of the little tables for two beside the chaffering of the romantic Thames. Sometimes a host may be detected in making homage to Cupid, and, as occurred to a right hon. baronet, the young bloods cheer him as he re-enters the Chamber.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ON THE OPENING OF PARLIAMENT AND ITS HUMOURS.

WITH the retirement of the Sovereign from the performance of the ceremony, one opening of the House of Lords is very like another. There is a patriotic, but otherwise not a very intelligible, reason on the part of old private members to be the "first-footers." I have suggested that this is unintelligible, but I had forgotten the existence of a class of amiable legislators—silent members—who debate not, neither do they spin—excepting questions.

These hon. Do-littles find their only chance of being "named" in the papers is by doing something ridiculous, so they get up before daylight and shiver their way to the House before the milkman has commenced his pastoral rounds, and, hey presto ! "there they are!" Some abnormally alert penny-a-liner on the look-out for "copy" finds this early worm in the person of Mr Jingle or Mr Heavysides, who is anxious that it should be known that he it was

who won the parliamentary flat race and led the way to Westminster and glory. I claim patentee rights in that phrase, "flat"-race.

It must be admitted, I fear, that any legislator who leaves a warm couch before even the workmen's whistles have begun to tear the luminous morning air, and, without bath or breakfast, letters, or daily papers, makes his way into the cold, unlit chamber and caverns of the Legislature upon the off-chance of taking the first seat or dropping the first hat of the new season, is himself a flat.

But a great number of highly respectable gentlemen have tried it. Dr Tanner for years defied all comers. Nay, he would go down with a cab full of hats — the collected chapeaus of compatriots — and spread out the lot in rows as tenants-in-possession of seats for the session. He even, in lieu of hats, called to his aid greatcoats. That adroit little game was spoiled, however, for future performers by an hon. member eliciting a ruling from the chair that no member was permitted to use his coat or yet two hats at a time for the purpose either of securing a seat for himself and a friend or of leaving one upon the bench while he wore the other in the lobbies.

I have in my mind's eye a certain stockbroker who would go down with an opera-hat under his arm and leave it inflated upon a disc of leather while he himself started off to the City to prosecute "time-bar-

gains" of another kind. Before Sir Frank Lockwood budded into a front bencher, a character which relieves the occupant of all anxiety on the subject of seats, he would resort to the two-hat trick. He came into the lobby in the afternoon just before the commencement of business, and he told this story: "I ran in this morning at five o'clock, left a 'utility' hat which I have kept for the purpose in my 'locker' for four years, then drove to my chambers, read up the case of '*Regina versus Snooks*,' breakfasted at the Cock, went up to the Old Bailey and cheated the gallows of one of its most attractive natural acquisitions, and here I am ready for anything that may be going! All this time my hat held the fort for me, and when I entered the House an Irish Liberal was addressing a question from one of the side galleries on the ground that there was no room for him downstairs. I at once relented, and that night gave my utility hat to a barman, who wore it till it was 'snorked' while keeping guard over a pint of ale for its owner, who had just crossed the bar to shake hands!" How fascinating this parliamentary flat race may become is shown, I think, in the fact that even such ten-o'clock risers as Mr (now Sir) John Maclare, Mr David Plunket (now Lord Rathmore), Dr Hunter (now across the Styx, I believe), Colonel Brookfield, Dr. Farquharson, General Goldsworthy, and dear old fleet-footed Mr Sharpe have entered for the field.

I once asked Colonel Saunderson if he had ever “done it.”

“No, by Jove!” was the reply; “I haven’t sunk so low as that for *réclame*. I think of all the poor expedients to which a legislator can set his sail it is to steer for the notice of the gallery.”

Mr Labouchere thought to violate the two-hat rule by a cunning little device of his own invention. He crossed before breakfast to the House, left his hat in the corner which he habitually occupies at the head of the front bench below the gangway, whether his party be “in” or “out,” then, taking a black silk skull-cap from his pocket, he returned to the bosom of his family—and breakfasted—and was not seen again at the House until he slipped in, in the same utility “skull,” in time to see the lions take their places for the usual wrangle of the night. So far as is known to the contrary, Mr Labouchere’s “hat-and-cap trick” has never been either overruled or capped!

A joke once was played off upon Sir J. Solomon, who has the largest head in the Chamber. His hat was covertly removed by a practical joker, the responsibility for which lies between Lord Arthur Hill and Mr Thomas Gibson Bowles, and the hat of Mr (now Justice) Darling, who had the smallest head in the House—a real *Scintillæ Juris* head—was put in its place.

The jest, of course, cut two ways. Sir John Solo-

mon found Mr Darling's dainty fledgeling hopeless, and Mr Darling felt that to put on Solomon's meant to don an extinguisher. In fact, as he said afterwards, "I felt like going to bed in it." Neither gentleman knew what to do, and vanity precluded a confession of the jest. Mr Darling dropped Sir John's hat under the bench, and Sir John himself furtively exchanged Mr Darling's for Mr James M'Lean's.

• These proceedings were watched by the author of the joke and several grinning friends, to whom the secret had been confided, standing behind the Speaker's chair. On the opening of a recent Parliament Mr H. C. Richards came in with two hats, neither of which did he require, thanks to the new system of "carding" seats. But the hon. gentleman explained that he had bought a new hat on his way down, and should keep the second in his locker.

"It might be useful."

But to leave the subject of the madding hat. For the members returned during the recess the opening of the session is a thing of beauty and a solace. The whole place is one of the most delightful nature. It is full of joys. Its beauty covers it as with the filmy gauze of an ecstatic dream. The frescoes, which we old hands bemoan, for their scrubby and peeling surface testifies to the need of an artist and restorer being put upon the estimates and added to the Crown, are, for the freshmen, full

of wonders, despite their too manifest neglect. The dingy, dust-eaten, high-relief decoration of the central lobby seems as spick and span as the "restored" beauty of Canterbury Cathedral. The rush and rumble of the private members' lobby, the flying hither and thither of Whips and their assistants, the crowd of watchful policemen and the cordon of servants, who in their evening dress and gold neck chains and badges recall something from the Mansion House or Guildhall,—all these people and things add to the fascination of the new-comers, who feel like so many Alices in Wonderland. There was Lord Charles Beresford (a new hat darkly brilliant over his ruddy salt-sea lineaments, and a blue paper—the returning-officer's notification of the noble Admiral's election for York—in his hands), who might pass for a well-nourished myrmidon of the law about to serve something on somebody. We miss the swaggering, typical gallantry of movement which always distinguished poor, brave Havelock-Allan, and look about for his successor, as well as for another, who has come to replace the Father of the House, and, *per contra*, is now its Baby.

Old hands stroll over the Chamber to see the improvements of the recess, and these consist principally, if not exclusively, of a new door to the Terrace for ladies, and the further installation of the electric light. The marble statues have been

“restored.” At the close of each session Lord Granville, Lord Iddesleigh, Lord John Russell, Burke, Pitt, Fox, and the rest are put in a mixture of vinegar - and - whitewash called “pickle.” The pickling process has served its purpose as a recess preservative, and the “pickle” has been washed off. The marble comes up, may I say, “as fresh as paint”? Time, however—and pickle—seem incapable of ridding the beautiful “Granville” of the stain in the marble, which leads the idle to ask if his lordship has not upset a glass of claret upon the breast of his dress-coat and down one leg of his trousers.

The great central hall, or octagon, has been “sessionally” cleaned. The exquisite Gothic moulding is, however, in a condition which defies the ordinary resources known to the charwomen of all the public buildings in England. The palace of the Legislature does scant credit to the Office of Works. Some years ago this lovely stonework was actually painted. Think of it—painted! and that bit of vandalism constitutes much of the existing difficulty of restoration.

Sir Charles Barry’s palace seems to have been reared under the protection of a committee of muddlers, who knew nothing, who conferred with other muddlers and then arrived at a joint conclusion. I would strongly suggest to such members who care for the “dressing” of the Legislature that

the magnificent brass chandelier, which cost, I believe, £500, and hangs in the central lobby, should be lowered to the height at which, for "testing" purposes, it hung the other day. As a rule, it is shot so high that its beauty is obscured. But on the eve of the opening it was brought down within ten feet of the ground, and I say "So might it be," for the effect was just exquisite. But it has since been raised almost out of sight. Such is stage management at the Westminster "T. R."

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE PLEASURES OF THE HOUSE—"THE TERRACE."

To "see the House" and walk on the Terrace have become an inflexible condition of a visit to town. So paterfamilias writes to the member for Bunbury-in-the-Beans or Peddleton-by-the-Marsh to carry his "womentkind" to the seat of British Government and the source of all the talents.

These typify the ladies by whom the legislator has been visited for several sessions now,—ever since the Terrace came to be talked about. You may distinguish them at a glance. Their distress is as charming as their effort to seem at ease. They are country cousins. They are new to the place. It puzzles them. Their confusion is deepened by finding so many bustling men about. The swinging doors add to the embarrassment. In the many turns there is perplexity. Now into a funnel like the inside of the pipe of a big church organ, with a hole through which Mr Speaker is seen in the chair,

and the backs of other members may be enjoyed. Then a climb to the corridors above, or a dip to the foundations where there be more corkscrew corridors, and then through a door, and, hey presto ! this is the Terrace.'

The presence of London's police at every turn and door and lobby is not calculated to add to the composure of the country cousin. By this time, tired with so much climbing and descending of stairs, and injunctions to "Look in here, but please don't pass the door"; and, "Allow me to go first"; and anon, "You will kindly wait here while I find out if you may peep in there"; and, "Take care of that turning in the staircase, I beg"; and, "Oh, there is Mr Balfour"; or, "That stout bucolic-looking gentleman is Mr Chaplin." "Oh, indeed," say the country cousins in a chime, looking the wrong way. Or, "Here is Mr Gibson Bowles—we call him affectionately 'Tommy'"; or, "Do you see that acidulated little gentleman?—that is Mr Labouchere. No, you have unfortunately missed him." "Ah, General; allow me to introduce my friend General Adolphus Slaughter—Miss Smith"; or, "And now if you look between the shoulders of those two big men you will see Lord George Hamilton—ah, he has just turned the corner; but there goes Herbert Gladstone. Bother, he has just disappeared. But here comes Mr Healy. No, it is Mr Pickersgill. Stay, there,

there is Sir Wilfrid Lawson with Mr Bonsor the brewer."

But before they have time to look their escort cries, "How very awkward ! You must go out this way, for the division bell is ringing and I must vote ; so sorry ! But turn to the left, then to the right, go up a staircase, across a lobby, down another staircase, pass through three doors—they are all in a line—and you will find yourself in a courtyard where there is a policeman, ask him to show you into Palace Yard, and there you'll be all right. Good-bye, *good-bye* ; so sorry, so sorry ! "

So ends the visit of the Misses Smith. They leave the place in a moral maze and go home with confused senses.

Very different, I fear it must be admitted, is it with the grand dames of Mayfair. They know everyone. They can find their way everywhere. Everyone either speaks to them or makes way for them. They form little knots, and block the passage, and stare defiantly at adipose legislators, unable in consequence of the fair blockaders to proceed. But who is there would dare to push them aside if a hundred division-bells were ringing ? Is there a member of Parliament who, escorting the rich Miss Vavassour, or the beautiful Miss Golightly, or the Countess of Mayflower, or the Duchess of Kensington, would leave her to discharge his conscience to Whip or constituency ?

"My dear fellow," says the Hon. Charlie Graceless insinuatingly to his irate Whip after a division, "I couldn't vote, really I couldn't. I have had Kitty Quickley of the Gaiety Theatre on the Terrace and I couldn't leave her, could I? Besides, she's been telling the President of the Council an awful story about a pair of lemon tights, which made him just scream, and he didn't vote either. So we really made it evens, you know."

"Bosh," replies the Whip. "Why didn't you leave her and vote, and then we should have counted for one more?"

Sir John Solomon is met in the lobby by Lord Valentia.

"Look here, where is your vote?" asks his lordship.

"My dear boy, awfully sorry; but her Royal Highness insisted upon my telling her the story of that man who mistook me at the opening of the Canal for the Duke of Cambridge, and I was in the middle of it when the last bell rang. Why don't you give us a 'lift' or a trolley to the division lobby from the Terrace?"

"Well," replies the Whip, "a duchess, even an H.R.H., is nothing to Walrond when it's an affair of votes. Keep clear of doubtful company in future."

There are few, if indeed any, more animating scenes in London, out of the grounds of Marlborough House

on a "State" day, than the Terrace of the House of Commons on a fine afternoon in the strawberry-time. It is worth seeing, and worth a deal of manoeuvring to see. It is what the country cousin seldom sees, and those who see it do so beyond the fringe of the madding crowd. Their mamma bustles them in and bustles them out again.

"Very unpleasant. Let us go upstairs."

•But Miss Leaver, a really pretty girl, does not think it at all unpleasant, and says—

"Oh, ma, do let us sit down."

"Waiter, bring these ladies chairs," cries Sir Plimley Phipscott, and Sir Plimley looks eagerly towards a group of ladies in a crowd of young legislators, which includes that arrogant Lord Obit, and he mentally wishes this "Leaver lot" at the bottom of the Thames.

When they do leave, it is only for Phipscott to see Lady Georgina drive with "that beast Obit" in her victoria.

What is so distressing about the country cousin is her dress. It is that which makes her noticed in the wrong way. It is all very good; but, hum! it is not of the right shade, or the shades are badly blended. She has got that mulberry in her hat when it ought to be round her waist. Then the things are so badly put on, and she carries them so.

The dowagers stare at the Leavers through their

suspended eyeglasses, and Lady Gwendoline actually "fixes them" with her single glass; and this makes Sir Plimley dance with rage, because he really is a gentleman, and while in his care the ladies receive all his attention, his recent annoyance at being cut out by Lord Obit notwithstanding.

Lady Gwendoline also is a lady, and her glass is fixed really upon the group in admiration of Sir Plimley's efforts to be attentive.

There really ought to be at the House of Commons a "Country Cousin Personally Conducted Agency." It should consist of a corps of M.P.'s past a certain age, not detrimentals, who would devote themselves to visitors not known in Mayfair.

This difficulty burned vigorously for half a session.

Mr Akers-Douglas, as First Commissioner, found a way out by means of a new way in, which was probably rather a witty solution of the problem. John Knox to another purpose spoke of the "monstrous regiment of women," and the fathers of the House of Commons, who take a serious view of life as well as of legislation, would probably in private have echoed the ungallant reflection of the ascetic. But the privilege of dispensing tea and cake or strawberries and cream to the ladies of their families, or to ministering angels from their constituencies, is one which the majority of members really think ought not to be seriously challenged. It is a gentle service, and we venture to

think that it represents in a general way about the only useful accomplishment of many a week of parliamentary drudgery.

The demand for tickets to the ladies' gallery, which of late has increased enormously, is explained by the desire to see the Terrace. It is not the lions of debate, but the lions at play, which the fair really come out to see. The House of Commons Terrace is now known from Land's End to John o' Groat's. In politer London it has become an annexe of Mayfair. The plan of Mr Akers-Douglas completely cut off the ladies from the members' stairs. Thus was Sir John Maclure able to ascend with the dignity becoming to a churchwarden and the brother of a dean. Mr John Redmond could go through without deflecting a single stride from that dignity which sits so well upon him. Sir Wilfrid Lawson could weave his rhymes as he walked, and Mr John Aird his Jubilious suggestions as he rises. Admiral Field might roll and lunge in his old sea-dog fashion. There would be no need of the policeman at the top of the stairs to cry to fair visitors to "pass on"—the ladies vanished from the scene.

Fair woman with a taste for the extra parliamentary pleasures of the Terrace thus finds herself Crown protected. By making a recognised "way in," the First Commissioner of Works established the right of the fair to visit the Terrace—when properly escorted, of course.

She has, in fact, been added to the care of one of the public departments. But the duties of the First Commissioner are not to be lightly regarded. In Mr Akers-Douglas my lady in a sense has discovered her Cook. But Mr Akers-Douglas, in discharging his new duties, is not required, of course, to control my lady's culinary vigils, but to "personally conduct" my lady on the way she should go. It is known as the road called Straight. That such a road should have been found needful at all I have explained. Those aged senators who have grown in the public service "fat and scant o' breath" have rudely insisted that woman has added herself to the nuisances of the time.

When the Terrace rose to fame, when duchesses and proud women of high degree, and persons of lower degree, came so nigh my lady's *bottines* as to "gall her kibes," the fame of the place became so great that its approaches resembled the crush-room of the opera.

Thus a gentle form of hospitality grew into an affliction until it almost threatened to stop the very cogwheels of legislation, arrest the wheelbarrow of Government, and block the tireless round of the British Constitution.

The new arrangement has not, of course, weakened the pleasures of the Terrace. But the place has for other reasons grown less fashionable. Still it remains

an annexe to Mayfair, and how fully this has been recognised we see in the single case of “Mrs — will be at home on the Terrace on Thursday. Tea from 5 to 7 p.m.” But this was found to be going a little too far, and the genial despotism of the Serjeant-at-Arms was invoked, and “at homes” on the Terrace were promptly stopped.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE HOUSE AS A WONDERLAND.

As a rule, an early adjournment is welcome to the majority of members. Just as the last fair guest was got off, say, on Friday night, a hansom dashed down to the members' entrance, and before the hon. gentleman it contained could alight the watchful constable intervened, and the following colloquy ensued :—

Policeman. House up, sir.

Hon. Member. Adjourned or counted ?

Policeman. Adjourned, sir.

Hon. Member. Cabby.

Cabby. Yessir.

Hon. Member. "Gaiety."

Crack of whip, rattle of cab-wheels—and curtain.

But the hon. gentleman had been dining at home—good man—and found himself able to wind up the night at the play instead of in telling the division lobbies.

The Whip is a useful institution, however, and

screens many a gay Lothario from the stings of his own lashes. But it is not always wise to plead possible divisions or a course of obstruction as a cover for a night spent elsewhere.

To many of our M.P.'s the House of Commons is a never-ending problem. It withstands all their intellectual solvents. It is their Wonderland. They never completely master it. Its code of regulations baffles their perceptions. They seldom really conquer it.

"Standing rules" have no distinguishing significance from "Sessional Orders." The ways of the Chamber are a network of perplexities. Where to go for this, where not to go for that, is equally a profound mystery to many. The uses of the tea-room are realised ; the resources of the library are but vaguely appreciated. No one really knows what lurks upon these top shelves. Not half-a-dozen members believe that 'Happy Hours with the Lighter Authors' are to be obtained in a Chamber universally understood to be severely devoted to Acts of Parliament and official returns as dry as dust and scarcely more nourishing. But if the adventurous M.P., in the spirit of the anxious inquirer, would go to the House before the arrival of its stern, unbending librarian, he would find some uncommonly racy old plays of the times of Wycherley and Alexander Pope.

In one branch of the Legislature there is a class

of hon. gentlemen who derive a never-ending stimulus to their own embarrassment. This is the order of voting. "The 'Ayes' to the right, the 'Noes' to the left," cries the Speaker, and hereupon arises the aggravating problem, "Which is the right and who are the 'Noes'?"

The House seems to be distributing itself out of four corners at the same minute. Not only that—it appears as though the "Noes" were going to the right as well as to the left, and that the "Ayes" had made common cause with their opponents.

There is an explanation for all opposing points, of course. There are two ways into each lobby. The black and eager columns of "Ayes" and "Noes" setting towards the seditious gloom of the Speaker's chair, find on the threshold of the door the parting of the ways. And they part. It is here where so much mischief to the unwary occurs. Here, in truth, the horns of the dilemma present themselves. It is so easy to go to the right in the House of Commons when you have learned how.

But there are gentlemen who drift through their political lives. They do not know anything which inspires, delights, and moves other members. I have in my parliamentary time known an hon. gentleman go through three Houses without ever finding his way to the Terrace. He was a Scottish county Liberal member.

True, the Terrace in those days was not a fashionable lounge — a great tea-boulevard by day and a wooing-tryst by night. At that time it was only for the strong. None ventured there who dreaded catarrh or lived in dodging rheumatism. A few hardy annuals used it only. It was the sad man's paradise ; the resort for silent communion of the man who had made his maiden speech and had been jeered at, and who vowed by the gliding waters of the dark Thames to be avenged.

I have also met M.P.'s who had never heard of the smoking-room, and who did not believe they might visit the parliamentary Leader in his room, or go into the vote office for an early paper.

This is, or was, another variant of the M.P.'s who don't.

CHAPTER XXXI.

SOME "OLD PARLIAMENTARY HANDS." o

SOME members are known by their hands or the works thereof. There are amongst the conscript fathers, like Mr Radcliffe Cooke and Mr Sharpe, and Sir Blundell Maple and Sir Cuthbert Quilter, men that are recognised as readily from a back view as from a front. But the hand is a distinctive thing as apart from a walk or a pose, and the study of the hand parliamentary will show, I think, that it may mark the man, if it do not exactly make him. The range of our studies embraces both the living and the recently dead, the retired as well as the active politician.

Gladstone's was a short, well-knit hand, with muscular fingers and highly developed knuckles. It was distinctly a fighting "nine." One hand was minus a finger, its place being taken by a bit of black glove, which concealed the stump. Mr Gladstone's hand appeared to have a local habit of expanding under the impetus of passion. His index-finger entered largely

into argument, and when debating an amendment, say, to the Home Rule Bill, which happened to arouse his ire, this limb appeared to assume Brobdingnagian proportions. It extended as if from telescopic pressure until it covered the buhl box and almost became W. E. G. himself. In another sense it did become W. E. G., just upon the principle that everything became him. It was one of Mr Gladstone's habits, when excited and waiting to spring into debate, to grieve his knees with his hands, and then the thews rose and moved in the time-pigmented flesh like stout whip-cord.

As a writing hand it was all firmness and symmetry, in spite even of failing eyesight or the tremor of eighty-seven. It was also a good literary hand, distinctly journalistic, and not at all difficult for people not accustomed, as compositors are, to "read at sight." When Hartley Coleridge was editor of a Westmoreland paper he would walk up and down the printing-room and say ever and anon, "Gentlemen, follow my copy—even if it should go out of the window." Mr Gladstone's notes were equally opposed to mutilation. Of Mr Gladstone's handwriting, as of his hand itself, one may say, "It was the firmest fist that ever drove pen o'er paper."

Lord Rosebery has the hand of a duchess-dowager—nourished and ample in form, soft, milky, and caressing, well-shaped, dimpled, and plump, pleasing

to the touch, and sympathetic, the hand of a “wily diplomatist”—a sinuous hand. The hand of the Liberal party now is Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman’s. Sir William Harcourt would bring into discussion, and lay upon the table, a small leg of mutton or a sweet little thing in shoulders of lamb—distinctly a Falstaffian hand. The doughty knight always walks with his hands crossed-wise upon his back—a sign of meditation.

Lord Randolph Churchill had a remarkably long, pale, thin hand, all transparency and blue blood, while he twirled round his jaw his fingers like so many graceful claws. It was a hand full of nervous energy, and seemed to preserve the old force, and to illustrate thoughts to which physical debility had left an inadequate mode of expression. It was an aristocratic hand ; yet, withal, a serviceable hand for gripping a gun or a fishing-rod, like a pair of long, thin legs astride a horse. It was always doing something, that hand ; and if not twirling my lord’s moustache, or going upon big hunting expeditions into the browny-grey lion forests of my lord’s Mashonaland beard, it was toying with its neighbour or twirling my lord’s watch chain, or clawing the impalpable air, or flipping imaginary peas off supposititious tables, or playing the tattoo of a certain dusky potentate.

Another long, pale, graceful hand is that of Mr Balfour. It is a lady-like hand, pale, tapering, re-

fined, dilettante, eclectic, which not even the golf-stick can affect. Its owner is sometimes "Miss Balfour," "Miss Lucy," "Sister Maria," and anon "Mary Ann." Mr Balfour, when excited in debate, always seizes the collar of his coat and tugs with both hands. In repose he uses with artistic finesse a delicate white, soft pocket-handkerchief, which is small and dainty, and is preserved intact until its graceful owner takes his seat upon the front bench, when it is drawn from his breast-pocket and opened with the leisurely movement of a grand dame of Society. Lord Salisbury, the uncle, has a compact, if warm and somewhat flabby, hand; while the Duke of Devonshire, commonly called the "Dictator of Disruption," has a large hand.

Mr Chamberlain goes into action in the House of Commons, or grows his orchids at Highbury, Birmingham, with a large flat hand; while Sir Henry Hartley Fowler brought through the Parish Councils Bill with a square, firm, solid, bourgeois hand, fingers cross cut, and almost of equal length, and a thumb with the pressure of a small Nasmyth hammer.

Mr Goschen, who has a fat, moist hand, a velvety, purring kind of hand, which seems to have been designed by nature to do the work of Mammon, and skilfully scoop in gold with cunning, noiseless touch, always sits, and sometimes walks, with his hands spread out upon his breast as if they were intended

to serve the purpose of a chest-plaster. Lord George Hamilton's are small and white, with a nervous twitching to be always destroying something. So his lordship picks old envelopes into tiny fragments, and his course has always been marked by snippets of paper as he has passed from the Treasury Bench or across the lobby.

Mr John Morley's is a sinewy, dry, cold hand, which might have just been rubbed with oatmeal-flour. It slides into your palm and then slides out again—an exiguous hand. The handwriting of the ex-Chief Secretary is small, the letters clean cut, as if with the point of a stiletto; a severe, precise, slow, yet methodical hand, suggestive of a severe intellect, and a piercing eye and compressed lips, and a nose as impossible to the artist as is the *pons asinorum* to a young beginner.

Mr Labouchere has a small, neat hand, which has seen a good deal of life, and has assisted that incurable cynic, its owner, to accomplish a few enterprises. Mr Labouchere's right hand is, perhaps, his best and truest friend. It is his second self. It demurs not at his bidding, and he finds plenty for it to do. It is a tireless writer, and does its work in a small up-and-down nervous character, so unlike the character of its master, who never tries to hide himself. In no sense is it a groggy handwriting:

The groggy handwriting of the House was Mr

Goschen's; the lady-like handwriting of the Parliament is Lord Salisbury's, whose signature is in the fine, running sprawl of the Italian school.

Mr John Burns has ascertained that his hand is identical in size and shape with that of the titular bard of Scotland. The hand of Mr Hanbury is large and brown; that of Mr Healy dark, tough, full of purpose. The hand of Mr T. W. Russell, from its habitual residence in T. W.'s trousers pockets, is pale, attenuated, overheated in grasp—a hand unused to labour, one that never drew a bolt or hurled a spear.

The writing of Mr Burns, as he is fond of saying of himself, is the writing of a labour member, who "cannot afford to spell like a duke or dress like a waiter."

CHAPTER XXXII.

WHEN HARCOURT LED.

WE have it on authority that no man should interfere with a man and his wife enjoying a quarrel with each other. Equally no Speaker or Chairman is wise in coming between the House and its dinner.

But there be occasions when a severe debate on a private bill dealing, say, with London water or gas, may be so prolonged that it pushes the day's procedure out of its place and leads to "complications."

Neither side of the House is at any time enamoured of private business, albeit the inducement must be very strong indeed. But this is one of the asides of parliamentary life in which hon. members must be prepared to make sacrifices.

"The little sheep looked up to be fed." The gentle flock suggested by this witching incident of pastoral life in the valley of the Jordan are those that browse round the Leader of the Opposition in the House of Commons. The two incidents are not, how-

ever, analogous, for in the parliamentary meadows the little sheep on a notable occasion looked up and were *not* fed. And great was the bleating thereof. Sir William Harcourt, as became the father of his flock, lifted up his voice to anger, but the wicked shepherd did not prostrate himself at the feet of the holy man of wrath. He defended himself in his iniquity, and the more the hungry cried the more pitiless grew his malignant denying ordinance.

I allude in this mixture of the paradox and the parliamentary to a certain passage in the House of Commons. The House had been discussing London water from a quarter-past three until close upon nine o'clock. Then the Speaker, nothing loth, was got out of the chair, and he skipped nimbly to his chop, already greatly overdone ; and the Chairman, who had taken a pliant hour for refreshment, and was full of vigour for the fray on that lively topic, the Education Bill, skipped as readily into his seat at the table. Water is not, as a rule, an intoxicating subject. Though a fanatic's beverage, it is not a rich man's dinner, or exactly a poor man's sustainer.

The Dillonites, like good Irishmen, devoted to the "eratur," deserted the Chamber with contempt during the debate on the London bills, and, as an appropriate variation from the shrine of St Kinahan, spent the evening in internecine debate upstairs. Because of the nature of the proceedings inside the Chamber,

there was a run upon strong waters in the lobby, and the sale of whisky became for that night a parliamentary record. No self-respecting Irishman or son of the rugged North could be expected on such a night to do otherwise.

"So much water," said John Wilson of Falkirk, "makes a man dry."

There is, obviously, much in this, and if Mr Wilson, or Mr Caldwell, or Dr Farquharson, or Mr Elmunk Robertson, poured down the sacred drink of Scotland to keep the damp out, who is there that can reasonably blame him?

The effect upon Sir William Harcourt and his followers who sat through the flood was remarkable. Water had evidently starved these patriots. It kept Dr Tanner alive—not the member for Mid-Cork, but the American "fasting" variety—and the doctor assisted vitality by promising himself at the end of the ordeal a "bully water-melon." Sir William and his followers had evidently had enough of water—so much of it, indeed, that it is doubtful if their taste would have run to water-melon "bully" or otherwise. Anyway, the proposal of Mr Lowther to go right away into discussing the amendments of the Opposition Leader's supporters so affected them that they broke into a hideous clamour for food, the like of which has not been heard since the famous revolt at Dotheboys Hall, or, indeed,

since Oliver Twist paralysed Bumble by “asking for more.”

A pack of hungry legislators is a rare and terrible variety of human suffering. The spectacle of Sir William rising six feet six of starvation is one of those grim exhibitions to be surveyed from the safe vantage of a distant gallery. When he rose, and in husky accents described the debilitating effect of the postponement of what he later told the House is called “dinner,” the right hon. gentleman looked as if he were about to avenge himself and his flock by swallowing the Chairman.

Mr Lowther at this fearsome spectacle quietly, if strategically, edged towards the retreat offered in emergency by the seditious gloom of the Speaker’s chair. Mr Jenkinson, the plumpest of the two remaining clerks at the table, determined that if the voracious knight of Falstaffian appetite meant to make a meal of *him*, his eyeglass at least should be left to tell the tale of cannibalism. Mr Morley looked quite as ready to dine off anything handy as did his friend, Mr Asquith, or Sir Frank Lockwood. Indeed, Sir Frank appeared to have marked that toothsome morsel, Dick Webster, for his own. Sir Matthew Ridley, Mr Ritchie, and Mr Hanbury quietly stole away; and Mr Chamberlain alone, heroically with Mr Balfour, held the breach.

The mind naturally swung to the vision conjured

up in fancy of Mr Hanbury dished as “long pig,” or of Mr Tommy Bowles served without “fixings”, as a saveloy for some such gourmet and Jack-the-Giant-eater as Sir John Leng or Mr Lloyd-George.”

A more impressive spectacle of unappeasable appetite was never witnessed by the King of the Cannibal Islands. Sir William Harcourt and his colleagues and followers rose as with the single elephantine impulse of one stomach and clamoured for meat. “Meat!” “Meat!” “Meat!”—the suburbs and the neighbouring kennels have never listened to the like of it. The House rang with the savage clamour of hungry men, and noble as is the wrath of “Historicus” in small things, it became, by contrast, nobly terrifying when the Squire of Malwood presented himself to a full House with an empty stomach. He beat his breast and “clooped” his lips like any aborigine in the agony of “chop” deferred. It was a moving scene.

Mr Lowther, in his alarm, was on the point of calling in the Speaker. “For Heaven’s sake don’t do that!” whispered Mr Powell Williams from the ready vantage of the back of the chair. “He will eat the Speaker, whose skirts would prevent his flight in time, and then who’d adjourn the House?” So Mr Lowther divided the House instead, and thus got rid of the danger.

But when on the following day Sir William Harcourt, his hunger in the meantime appeased, got the Speaker safe in the chair, he raised the whole question of the right of the House to adjourn for what he said “is called dinner.” It became, in point of fact, a “definite subject of urgent public importance.” Even then the Chairman, Mr Lowther, had not quite got over the sensation of finding himself slipping in detail into the colossal stomach of the Liberal party, and was discreetly absent. I doubt, too, if Mr Gully was altogether easy in his mind, and it is certain that Mr Jenkinson regarded first the stalwart knight and his own eyeglass with furtive interest. Mr Gully, who, doubtless, had his own reasons—sage ones—was uncommonly conciliatory, and admitted the soft impeachment that the dinner-hour adjournment is a proper thing.

He hastened, indeed, to put himself right with the entire Liberal party by saying that so long as he is Speaker he will observe the festive half-hour dinner interval. This promise acted as the manna before the children of Israel. It was as balm of Gilead, and whatever might have been the disposition of Sir William or his colleagues and followers in hunger, the incident, in the language of France, was allowed to close. But still Mr Lowther held aloof; and in the dilemma which arose between the necessity of going into committee and the absence of the official

appointed to preside at the feast of reason, Mr Stuart-Wortley gallantly laid himself at the shrine of duty.

Two versions of Mr Lowther's doings at this juncture were offered. First, said the wits, "He is eating the dinner he deprived Sir William of." Secondly, another class of wits said, "He hesitates to meet the members whom he yesterday desired to starve." Anyway, the experience has proved so salutary that the sporting politician may safely bet his bottom dollar that never again will a Chairman of Committees be found to stand between the Liberal party and their soup.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE LADIES' GALLERY.

WE will now turn to another phase of the House of Commons, socially.

During an Easter recess, which, being late by the calendar, at the same time opened the London season, the First Commissioner of Works gave the finishing touches to a scheme of great weight and moment. This was a scheme for “lifting” by hydraulic pressure the dowagers and their daughters who desired to listen to the debates in the House of Commons to the ladies’ gallery without having recourse to the wearying staircase.

In the United States this machine is called an elevator; in England it is known by the more prosaic name of a “lift.”

The parliamentary mind, steeped in the ascetic traditions of St Stephen’s, which once rejected all reforms of itself, stands bemused before the inroad of modern invention. Time was when science knocked in vain

at the door of the law-makers. Gas, we have been told, had to fight a hard battle before it could make its way into Pall Mall, and the aristocratic region thereabouts. Crockford's, White's, and the Palace petitioned against the offensive innovation. The House of Commons, which is always the last to come into touch with the spirit of the time, was the last to surrender to the age of gas, though probably it felt, with a glimmer of self-conscious modesty, that it had a sufficiency already.

It clung to its lamps as a drowning man is said to cling to straws, and yearly there appeared upon the Estimates a vote for oil. For some inscrutable reason, having regard to the relations of the two, the contract for supplying the Houses of Parliament with lamps and oil was given to Mr Gye, though what possible connection there could be between Grand Opera and the Legislature is one of those things which poor Sothern used to say, as Lord Dundreary, "No fellah can understand."

So, slowly, and with much repugnance, the House has had to open its doors to the handmaidens of science : the telephone has been admitted ; the electric bell is all over the place ; the electric light is used in all the corridors and lobbies. In the cloak-room there may be seen a wonderful instrument called the "Column Printer," which delivers the momentary news of the flying day by electricity, and printed ;

and now, to mark yet another advance, the Queen's own Minister—the chief ædile of the Crown—has given his consent for the construction of a lift to the ladies' gallery. What next, and next?

The ladies' gallery has from time to time been the occasion of much soreness of official heart. It is a place of comparative luxury. The ladies were stowed away in the roof of the old House, the prey to cobwebs, spiders, and the suffocating fumes of the very indifferent luminant of that time. They enjoyed no privileges whatever. Refreshments were not for them. But nowadays the fair visitor may have tea and toast, ice, and even ardent wines. To see to her pleasure, the authorities wisely, and with a courtly discretion, appointed an attendant of the most diaphanous courtesy, who is assisted by a page in buttons. Still are the dowagers, or rather their hon. friends, dissatisfied.

The gallery, we are told, is too small for its purpose—which is likely enough ; the grille, or Byzantine grating, which forms a lacework of aggressively edged brass, is declared to obstruct the view of the rhetorical lions downstairs, which also may be indisputable. Finally, the ladies who have to take the second or third row of seats cannot see the occupants of the two front benches upon the historic floor below, and in consequence have their range of vision limited to the space occupied by Mr Healy and his friends

on the one hand, and Mr James Lowther and his associates on the other hand. They were even unable to catch a glimpse of Sir Richard Temple.

There are two galleries really, or rather there are two apartments—a sort of outer and an inner shrine of beauty. The inner of the two belongs by prescriptive courtesy to the wife of the Speaker, and it is here that the *élite* of society, or the wives of statesmen, have their chairs. Mrs Gladstone occupied the corner, which threw her in the line of an angle with the front Opposition bench, and thence she listened to the eloquence of her lord. Mrs Gladstone's presence in this corner was always indicative of a coming speech from the Colossus of words.

Once a lady fell asleep in the gallery, and was locked in when the House adjourned, and her husband, a member—a Cabinet Minister to-day—was naturally greatly shocked on reaching home at 3 a.m. to find the partner of his joys absent. The thought instantly seized him that Mrs—— might have been “locked up,” and returning to the House, his suspicions found themselves justified in the agonising alarm of his now more than wakeful spouse. In the brilliant reputation-making days of the Fourth Party, Lady Randolph Churchill might have been seen, with quivering emotion, listening to the Chauvinistic attacks of her lord upon his leaders. Later, another pretty vision clung to the bars, listening, with pale, eager face and

swimming eyes, to one of the brilliant attacks which it is the pleasure of her husband to make upon his former colleagues—Mrs Chamberlain to wit.

But the ladies who really crowd the more democratic of the two galleries are the wives, the mothers, the daughters, the cousins, and the aunts of the country borough members. These fair dames may be seen in possession of the entrance very early in the afternoon, much, in fact, as we see people in possession of the entrance to the pit of a well-favoured theatre hours in advance of the play, only there is no “side entrance” to the ladies’ gallery “by payment of sixpence extra.” They are very jealous of their privileges, and when the lift is opened, are prompt to share with Mr Chamberlain’s duchesses or Mrs Gully’s personal friends the advantages which it offers. But the mind stands appalled at the vision of a mother of the democracy of fifteen stone, or yet of a brace of duchesses, being stuck in the “lum,” as the Scottish wife would probably describe the shaft, through some hitch in the machinery.

This, however, is but a small detail in the phenomena of accident common to a Chamber which makes laws for the judges to quarrel over.

“Gad, sir, I am even informed that the reporters up there have coffee and beef-steaks, just like us.”

Yes, that is true—they had sustenance; only that the steaks in those days consisted of boiled beef and

pickled cabbage, brought in secretly by an enterprising doorkeeper from the cook-shop over the way, and carried in his red bandana handkerchief, and sold surreptitiously on a back staircase. The food, indeed, was sold in secret as contraband, with a hunk of bread, to the hungry stenographer at fifteenpence a slice, and was regarded as cheap at the price, the minimising presence of the red bandana notwithstanding. But the reminiscence is only a red landmark, a progressive finger-post that points its own moral.

The House of Commons is emerging from its shell of old-fashioned, crusted exclusiveness. Now the Crown makes the reporters as comfortable as possible, and the First Commissioner of Works, who has already fitted a "lift" to carry up the reporters' beer barrels, is about to fit up a second to raise the gentlemen to their cage. Still are women not satisfied, nor will the pure spirit of tranquillity descend upon them, even when a hole is knocked in the Constitution to permit of an elevator being made from the gallery into the House itself. For to that to-morrow's debate on Woman Suffrage is logically designed to lead. A strange and moving sight it will be, the crowd of "blues" in the gallery and the Amazons of emancipated womanhood raiding the lobbies at the head of their weaker brethren, Mr McLaren and Mr Samuel Smith.

Some stories further of the ladies and their gallery are still recalled.

There is the authenticated story of a well-known Q.C., the lord of a remarkably charming wife. He left home in dinner dress, and would be out till very late. Obstruction was in the air—it was more than in the air. It became an all-night campaign, and as day dawned the Whip, finding his resources strained by the collapse of overwrought human nature, wired for help. A telegram reached the wife of the Q.C. at 5.30 A.M., summoning her absent lord to the House. Finding the hon. and learned gentleman not at her side, she got up and hurried to the Chamber in a condition of great alarm, and was explaining to the Whip that Mr —— was "understood" to be "at the House," when that eminent limb of the law, still wearing his evening dress and smiling like the risen god of day, sauntered into the lobby. But the cherubic smile vanished at the sight of his spouse, and gave place to an anxious explanation of a night at the Temple in the interests of a valued client whose "case" was embodied in an abnormally intricate brief.

Her peccant lord was driving by from a night across the water, when he espied the doors of the House open, and he thought he would just look in. It would afford him salvation, and in seeking salvation he found his wife also. Of course the Whip, a master of discretion, kept his own counsel, but the lobby had its laugh all the same.

Hereby hangs another pretty story, which has the

double advantage of being true. A young squire took his bride to dine with some men at the House. After dinner he placed her in Mrs Gully's gallery, and with his companions went to play "poker" in the "Moses" chamber. The House was counted out ; the hon. member, not seeing his wife in the lobby, concluded she had gone home, whither he repaired some hours later to find the bridal chamber empty. After the first surprise the hon. gentleman thought of the House, wondered if his angel had got locked in the gallery, drove down, found a policeman at 3 A.M., and, by dint of much rummaging for keys, obtained access to the cage, where the pretty bird was found complacently awaiting rescue. But her husband vowed he would never give, or be beguiled into joining, a dinner-party on a private members' night again.

Many ladies of course use the gallery with affection, because they take their debates seriously. But with more it is merely an excuse for seeing the Terrace. Hon. gentlemen have mixed ideas as to its construction ; and there are many who supported Colonel Welby's recent desire for the removal of the grille altogether.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

CONCERNING THE PRIVATE LIVES OF THE GREAT.

THERE is much humanity in Parliament. Our statesmen have their little weaknesses, their foibles, and eccentricities. Yet the "free and independent" are schooled to look upon their rulers as men above the touch of nature. The Nonconformist conscience would have its doctrinaires lead lives unrelieved by a single vice. But really no man can be a hero to his valet.

For some years after his entry into parliamentary life Mr Chamberlain was a source of abiding anxiety to his family. The family was at once political and domestic, the political portion consisting of those who sat in Birmingham at the feet of the new Gamaliel. Mr Chamberlain's personal habits must, it was affirmed with piteous apprehension, lead to an early grave. Mr Chamberlain was then, and is now, a gourmet. He dislikes exercise, and never takes it. He prefers French cooking, and when unable to obtain it in Birmingham, which of course was the misfortune of Birmingham, he resorted to those vilest of imitations,

English "made dishes." He drank then, as he drinks now, modestly of champagne, and for years smoked an average of ten big cigars daily.

I do not, of course, commit myself to the perfect accuracy of this; but I may quote the words of a former political colleague of the Colonial Secretary, and a member of the present House of Commons, who said: "Chamberlain is a marvel. He has eaten and drunken and smoked the very things which are traditionally poison to men of his build and sedentary habits. Five-and-twenty years ago we predicted his early death, but he is still thriving and going the old pace; he has, in fact, outlived several of his youngsters, and, well, we've given him up, leaving him to live his worst, and some day, perhaps, avenge our prophecies."

Sir William Harcourt, as a votary to the pleasures of the table, has been everything by turns. He has been a one-bottle man and a no-bottle man. He has been a great eater, a moderate eater, and almost an ascetic. He has lived like an epicure one year and fed like a farm-labourer next year. He has, anon, "done himself well," and he has been unkind to himself. Finally he settled down to the conviction as expressed in the antithesis, "I feel best when I eat least."

Sir William is a man of mercurial moods. Anon he would be in the seventh heaven of hilarity and optimism, and would suddenly sink into a veritable Tophet's pit of depression. He would talk of throwing

up public life, go down to Malwood, give it out with impatient gesture that "I am sick of this life we are leading up there, and am resolved to cut it."

"There is no doubt," as a member of the Malwood circle told an anxious inquirer, that "he [Harcourt] means it when he says it, but a night's sleep and the mood is off."

Sir William Harcourt, though naturally of a genial disposition when at home, has proved instinctively an "autocrat of the breakfast table." In the winter the squire of Malwood sat in a chair of Falstaffian build, led the revels, which consisted of charades "made at home" by one of his sons, but any reference to polities was strictly forbidden from the chair. This, however, was a precept more honoured in the breach than in the observance when Sir William was got away from home. One of the Whips, Mr R. Knight Causton, who gave good dinners to the chief officials and party "items," often followed up a feast by an impromptu House with Sir William as Speaker in the chair, and the effect was "just lovely," as the American lady said of "The last Sleep of Argyll" to the Marquis of Lorne, her escort.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer is seen at his best on the Treasury Bench: he is really admirable; his temper seldom ruffled; his mind never goes wrong; his answers are invariably soothing. Such a man would be a born leader of a Chamber which hates to

be driven. But in his private life Sir Michael Hicks-Beach is dreadfully "sick." He is a child of sportive fortune—the infant of a postponed destiny. He was born not too late, but too early. A day would come, and he knew it, when Parliament, fatigued by the pace, would ask to be relieved of young men in a hurry. Then would come *his* chance—the chance of all cool-tempered men. And it is the knowledge of this, and the fact that he may not be alive to see it, that has made him peevish. But the House has never seen Sir Michael peevish. His peevishness he keeps to himself. Sir Michael's temperament is "thin" and irascible when not under the searchlight of the House. He is, in fact, a melancholy Jacques, without that gentleman's sardonic asceticism.

The epicure used to be Mr Henry Chaplin, who, it is said, cultivated a taste, by example, for nightingales' tongues at the Amphitryon Club.

When a young man living on the edge of Grub Street, Mr John Morley was a dandy with a passion for dancing. In those distant days there would be dancing at Willis's Rooms, and the future Chief Secretary for Ireland might be seen skipping about the floor—a singular presentment of spruceness, as it would seem. Might one look upon the living picture!

Mr Arthur Balfour at home has lived as nearly as possible in the spheres of music and art. There is a story that while making one of his inspections in the

north of Ireland, when Chief Secretary, he entered a cottage to ask for a drink of milk. In the little room stood a piano, to the astonishment of the visitor, who, taking a chair, ran his fingers over the keyboard, discovered the tone to be good, and then losing all consciousness of Dublin Castle, his official tour, and the milk he had craved, he became absorbed in a sonata, to the delight of the peasants of the village, who had never heard such music. That voluntary did more to weaken the hold of the National League upon its dupes than all the speeches of the Dillons, Davitts, Healy's, and the rest had done to stiffen it.

There is a story that at his beautiful home, Whittingham, Mr Balfour suffers from musical euthanasia. He will get up very early, dress anyhow, and before his bath will descend to the drawing-room, start with Mendelssohn, and keep it going long after the breakfast hour, quite oblivious of the fact that his house is filled with visitors, who all this while are beating the devil's tattoo upon the window-panes.

Sir Henry Fowler I recall as a hypochondriac. He has a deadly dread of too much fresh air, and passes most of his life in dodging draughts. He begins a greatcoat before any of his colleagues, and is the last to leave it off. In driving he always sits with his back to the horse's tail, and so prefers a "growler" to a hansom. Sir Henry, for so square-built and square-jawed a man, is singularly nervous, but it is

not an intellectual nervousness. It is physical only, and is quite local. As a speaker the right hon. gentleman is known as one of the best in the House of Commons, and indeed at one time men talked of him as Mr Gladstone's successor in an oratorical sense. His "style" connected Mr Gladstone's and Mr Bright's; but of late—after his illness, in fact—Sir Henry seldom speaks.

It used to be said of Lord Palmerston that he would, as Foreign Secretary, go to war with a straw between his teeth. One night during a dire crisis in his fortunes as Prime Minister, when almost every man of his party was against him, Lord Rosebery telephoned from the Durdans to London to know "how Roberts stood in the billiard match." The story illustrates the gay indifference, or, as the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes would call it, the shocking levity, of one who is charged with the protection of the Nonconformist conscience.

Lord Salisbury is what would in some quarters be called a "clean living" man. I prefer to speak of him as a paterfamilias who, like Caesar's wife, is above reproach. Simplicity is the order of the Premier's private life. He does not care for company, and positively loathes fuss. To go to bed early is the aim of his existence outside of its duties to the public.

CHAPTER XXXV.

CONCERNING THE SPEAKER'S HOSPITALITIES.

"The Speaker gave his first full-dress parliamentary dinner of the session last night."

"Mrs Gully held her first parliamentary reception of the present season at the Speaker's house yesterday."—*Vide* morning paper.

These are amongst the delightful and much-cherished circumstances of the session. They have a long historical interest, and to the new M.P., who, fresh from some back town in the provinces, has risen upon his own merits, goaded by an ambitious wife or stimulated into action by the interests of daughters who have to be placed, the Speaker's dinners and the receptions of the Speaker's wife possess a high relative value.

Of course the drawing-room of the Speaker is not quite equal socially speaking to the presence-chamber of Buckingham Palace. But "a card" for his wife's at home is a passport to good society for the M.P. It may,

indeed, lead to better things, though before fostering hopes it would be well to remind the presentee that a good deal will depend upon herself. An exceptionally pretty face, we know, invariably commands its price, whatever that may be. A smart dress worn as if to the manner born is next, in London at least, to a pretty face. Good manners are indispensable in either case. Bad manners will spoil the prettiest face or the smartest gown.

Mr Gully, as Speaker, has upset some subtle but obvious calculations arising out of the manner of his selection. He was expected to do things differently. When rumour went about that the member for Carlisle was to be proposed as Mr Peel's successor, Mr Balfour is reported to have feigned complete ignorance of the existence of Mr Gully. This was perhaps but one of those edifying examples of child-like good-nature.

All the same, the Radicals did look for "a new-departure Speaker." When the great Sir William Don, the English actor, visited America, he had an engagement in Buffalo, and much incensed the people staying at the hotel by keeping within his own room. "The fact is, gentlemen," he said in response to a remonstrance by deputation, "the weather is so beastly hot that I dine in my shirt-sleeves, and therefore I dine in my own rooms. I could not obviously come to the public table without my coat." This rather

nonplussed the American Remonstrancers who brought back the reply, but the deputation counselled submission among themselves. If the mountain would not come to the mice the mice should go to the mountain ; but Sir William Don promised to attend in future the dinners at the hotel. The guests sat down in their shirt-sleeves ; Sir William stalked in wearing faultless evening clothes. Tableau !

• And that exactly hits the case of Mr William Court Gully. He was expected to dine in his shirt-sleeves, and instead sat down in ruffles and lace, silk hose and steel buckles. It was, in fact, privately and confidently prognosticated that the Speaker's first act in the chair would be to tear down and kick off all the "fustian" which in easy vocabulary hedged it round. There should be no more full-dress parliamentary dinners — that is, dinners eaten in the garb of Australian paroquets — no more state, no more ceremony, not even a flunkey in calves and shoulder-knots. But what has the revenge of time and a new Radical Speaker done for the "Little Englanders" ?

"Full dress is *de rigueur* still. The ceremony is as invincible as ever. The calves of the flunkies are as obtrusive as ever. • In short, Mr Gully has shown himself to be more an aristocrat than Mr Peel himself. The late Speaker, in the goodness of his experimental heart, did relax the regulations as to

full dress. But, like Blue Beard to another end, he found himself engaged in a hopeless experiment.

It was a most amusing night, but Mr Peel never repeated the experiment. One gentleman, a Welsh miner, sang Welsh comic songs. Fancy comic songs in the Welsh language ! The Speaker was in simulated agonies of delight. Comic songs were succeeded by Scotch whisky and briar pipes. Mr Peel had been a reactionary of a purely humane and speculative description.

Any of the "horny-handed sons of toil" wending his way across Westminster Bridge may see the signs of much gay merry-making. The long and stately windows which pierce the wing of the great Palace as it sweeps towards the Thames from the clock-tower are lit with a myriad of coloured lamps, and through the uncurtained glass the "horny" one may gaze his joyful fill on a sumptuous feast and a gay company. It might be one of Ouida's banquets in a kaleidoscope of ambient crystal and gold and silver dishes, and blue and gold uniforms, and crimson and powdered servants. The fascinated artisan, passing in the hurry and grime of emancipated labour, is informed, and the information doubtless sharpens his own appetite, that the Speaker of the House of Commons is entertaining the British Government at dinner. Afterwards the Speaker's wife holds a reception.

It is the custom of the Speaker, and it has been his custom almost from time immemorial, to inaugurate each session with a series of full-dress parliamentary dinners. The "full dress" is not the scheme of dead black and white of gentlemen who dress as hotel waiters, but that which is ordained for the salt ones of the earth, the men who go to the Queen's Court and attend levees, and are privileged to wear the uniform of the sister services. As an example of sumptuary taste, there are few uniforms prettier than the first class of the Civil Service. Following the dinner to her Majesty's Ministers comes the dinner to the members of the late Government, and then as many private members of both parties as can be entertained in the time allotted.

Formerly the Speaker occupied himself twice a week in entertaining the faithful Commons. Mr Speaker Denison, who lived not so long ago, maintained the traditions of his office with sumptuous liberality. He dined the entire House at the opening of each session. Of course he did it in his own way ; still, the result was accomplished, and each member was permitted to carry to the grave the recollection of having dined with the Speaker.

The broadening of the franchise has of course brought into parliamentary life persons to whom the portals of Westminster were closed under a narrower qualification ; and no doubt the modern Speaker,

even though touched unavoidably with the tar-brush of the democracy, likes to draw the line somewhere.

When Mr Bradlaugh, in 1880, was elected for Northampton, Mr Labouchere is reported to have cynically remarked, "I thought they'd have drawn the line at me!"

It used to be said in the days of dynamite and outrage that the mistake Mr Gladstone made was in not inviting the Irish leaders to breakfast. Of course it might not have "paid" Mr Parnell and his followers to go near Downing Street. Anyway, the blunder was worth the trial. But Mr Gladstone felt he must draw the line somewhere, and he chalked it at the toes of Mr Biggar. But the times are changed—I do not say "out of joint." The Liberal Tom Noddy in the early 'Eighties was careful to flick the bench on the Irish side with a paper before sitting in it, and then discreetly drop the thing under a Tory seat.

But though all M.P.'s may not dine with the Speaker, all, with their wives, may attend the receptions of the Speaker's wife. At first the country-made *habitué* of this temple of enchantment to the ambitious finds the crush intolerable; but a little custom, and the fear of destroying the train in front of her vanishes. This destruction, indeed, may sometimes evolve itself into a form of retribution for slights and disappointments elsewhere. For the sen-

sible Mrs Juggins or the thoughtful Mrs Jobson has not been slow to discover that mixed up with the influence and the privileges of M.P.-ship are many hollow mockeries, and in fact a great deal of humbug. It is only the woman born to Mayfair, and accustomed to have her dress torn into ribbons, and who finds a reception at the Speaker's house a mere detail in a long nocturnal programme of "functions," that takes small agonies as great pleasures. It is the wife of the working M.P.—ay, and the working M.P. himself—that feel the utterlessness of it all.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

SOME PARLIAMENTARY DANDIES.

NATURALLY where people of fashion assemble so numerously great allowance is made for the dress and the adornment of men ; and this is so sharply recognised as a condition of the place that there are men whose claims upon history hang upon a waistcoat or a hat.

Take what has recently come into a kind of revived existence in the White Ducks Party.

The hot weather, which is good for the corn, seems also to favour the spontaneous generation of new political parties. Henley Week and the propinquity of Goodwood are perhaps fitting periods for the adornment of gallant manhood. But it is clearly to the heat of the weather that we owe the "New White Ducks Party." Originally the members with the courage of a pair of white linen "ducks" were limited in the late Parliament to Mr Thomas Gibson Bowles. But the germ thus warmed and incubated into vitality

and virility has produced yet others, and Captain Thomas Bowles, master mariner, is no longer left to pace the quarter-deck in gay monopoly of his ducks.

The Admiralty, which, indeed, has always looked with jealousy upon the commercial marine, felt that it must assert itself. Mr Goschen held a levee of his young men.

"I cannot," he said, "wear a pair of white trousers myself because of the reptile caricaturists, who would at once fit me with a cocked-hat and a pair of epaulettes. But it is clear now for the good of the service something must be done to *bowl* jokes disclaimed over the member for Lynn. Now I suggest that you, Austen, should clap on a pair of first lieutenant's 'jumpers.'"

And Mr Goschen trod his cabin—I mean his First Lord's rooms—with the air of one who meant to sail straight for Havre.

"Sir, I should be very glad to oblige my revered chief," replied the Civil Lord of the Admiralty; "but, in the first place, linen trousers are at variance with my father's accustomed raiment, and as we have been irreverently called the young Obadiah and the old Obadiah, I must respectfully decline to make a departure that would be disapproved of in Princes Gardens."

Mr Goschen was visibly annoyed, and Mr Chamberlain thought.

"Of course," he said, "if you can induce my pa to wear ducks that would alter me. If I might suggest a substitute, I would name Ellison Macartney, who really looks as if he had been born in a ward-room, and who by reason of his approaching marriage must know something more about 'ducks' than I do."

So the Parliamentary Secretary came out in white ducks too, and, like the dainty captain, donned a black frock-coat and silk hat.

But alas for the "schemes o' mice and men"! Hardly had the First Lord done the laying-on of hands upon his own exculpated bosom than there appeared upon the Irish benches a phenomenon.

Captain Thomas Bowles, M.M., cocked his spy-glass and discovered this to be Major Jameson. Well, it might have been worse, as every one admitted. It might have been T. P., or Mr Dillon, or even Mr Swift MacNeill himself. Mr Macartney breathed.

But the line was not to be drawn at white ducks. It extended even to the White Jacket Party, led by Colonel Lockwood, M.P., as a nucleus. No one would have ventured to call Colonel Lockwood a germ, though as a chrysalis he certainly is our most splendid butterfly.

The hon. and gallant gentleman came down wearing a short linen jacket with vest to match, and as

a finish one of the boating hats in pale yellow straw. Not since Admiral Sir John Hay fluttered in one summer afternoon rippling in a suit of yellow Indian silk had a vision so breezy been seen in the House of all the talents and all the graces.

Our dandies, to rest satisfied with the orthodox wear of Piccadilly, are Sir Herbert Maxwell, Mr George Wyndham, Lord Chelsea, Viscount Valentia, Sir Lewis M'Iver, Mr George Goschen, and Mr Ian Malcolm.

But these are not dandies to be circumvented in a bandbox. They know the world, and have tasted of its various philtres of life. Some of them, indeed, are artists in art as well as in clothes and the way to wear them, and in speech and the most to be got out of it.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE DUKE OF RUTLAND AS POET AND DANDY.

HANDSOME in every stage of his long life, a man of the world, widely informed, a dandy therefore in the best sense of the word, Lord John Manners in the House of Commons and Duke of Rutland in the Upper Chamber may be said to have united the best traditions of each.

Just sixty years ago the noble Duke, then Lord John Manners, endeavoured to reform England through a sheaf of poems. In this notable effort his Grace cannot be said to have dreamed alone. The record of the nation is full of the prowess of the bard. Armies have marched to victory with song and heroics to lead them. But the rising hope of the house of Belvoir in 1841 directed his stanzas not at the passions of an army. He aimed at the heart and at the mind of the society of his day.

It is really very curious, when you think of it, how many people in all ages since the Conquest, and even

before that crowning mercy, have come forward to arrest the tendency of England to go to the devil.

If these observers are to be believed, England, so far from progressing, has been going backwards from bad to worse.

These gloomy vaticinations are the salt of progress, or, if the Duke of Rutland and Mr Herbert Spencer prefer it, they hold o'erleaping ambition in check.

But sixty years ago society would seem to have been awful sinners,—at any rate we judge by the lamentations which Lord John Manners poured upon the lambent air from the classic woods of Belvoir or amid the recreant prattle of Park Lane. One object of this chapter is to unearth and impart renewed life to—we will not say the Duke as a poet, but to the Duke's poems as indicating the spirit of their time, and, of course, the young patrician himself.

Take, as an instance of noble naïveté and national desperation, the following gentle wail :—

“A plaintive, melancholy note is mine,
Such as was wont to float around the shrine
In days when faith through ignorance could hear
The voice divine, and own a Godhead near.”

It is difficult to hear, in these limpid lines, ending in their archaic catch-rhyme points of “mine and shrine” and “hear and near,” the later voice of the impassioned pedant, who would rate in well-set phrase the Philistines of the unregenerate 'Eighties.

At that time Lord John Manners was an elegant stripling, divinely dressed, and moving in an orb of semi-celestial refinement. Outside of that orb he instinctively shuddered, and taking as an illustration of his view of life as she was lived beyond his own beatific state, we find the future Duke ruminating thus :—

“ I thought of sinners’ awful doom,
My flesh began to creep ;
I wished myself again at home,
I wished I were asleep.”

Religious drift was indeed the prevailing tendency of the Duke’s mind in 1841, the year of the birth of the Heir-Apparent. Bad men were then abroad seeking to uproot and pull down the sacred establishment of the Church and to open its burial-ground to those heretics who embody the Nonconformist conscience. It was at this sad epoch that the inspired nobleman gave to the world those imperishable lines :—

“ Let wealth and commerce, laws and learning die,
But leave us still our old nobility.”

The Duke is of the same opinion still, though he may have improved his metre. With a prophetic instinct the young nobleman foresaw the advent of the Lloyd-Georges, the Carvell Williamses, and the Osborne Morgans, for he appealed to society to stand forth in defence of the gracious union of the Church and State :—

“When Mother Church her richest stores displayed,
 And Sister State on her behalf arrayed
 The tempered majesty of sacred law,
 And loved to reason, but at times could awe :
 When kings were taught to feel the dreadful weight
 Of power derived from One than kings more great,
 And learned with reverence to wield the rod
 They deemed entrusted to their hand by God.”

But there is something that smacks almost of Republicanism in the subjoined lines :—

“Haughtiest kings have stooped to kiss the rod
 Wielded by some poor minister of God.”

From both the above and the following it is conceivable that Mr Disraeli dissented, just as Lord Salisbury, were he not a cynic, would start in fright :—

“The State, alas ! enervate and effete,
 Feels now no more that all-productive heat
 Which, in her noon tide prime, she erst received
 Fresh from the Church, believing and believed.”

It is curious to reflect that the Duke of Rutland has lived to see the position of the Church considerably shaken, and about a third of the kings of the world unseated. But he himself has dwelt for years in the memories of the past, though personally remembered by the survivors of the 'Fifties and 'Sixties as one of the most picturesque figures of what some would call the real House of Commons.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE PLEASURES OF POLITICAL INSOLENCE.

ONE feature of the New House of Commons is the development of the charming pleasantry known as political insolence. This really is a fine art in its way, but its practitioners are necessarily few as professors qualified for the work. There are two forms of political insolence known to, and approved of by, the House of Commons. The first is identified with the name and the memory of one who was known of men as George Nathaniel Curzon ; perhaps the other best-known interpreter is Dr Tanner, or Mr Bowles, or Mr William Redmond. At one time in the earlier stage of his parliamentary career Dr Tanner did not hesitate to push insolence to the extreme of a practical insult. At that time Mr Walter Long sat as a young parliamentarian below the gangway and opposite Dr Tanner (there was something in Walter Long that afflicted Dr Tanner with chronic irritation).

Mr Long has always been known for a pretty cour-

age. This is usually the case where a man is known to his friends, and indeed to the world, by his Christian name (Mr Long is "Walter" all round the course).

The vendetta was continued with such energy that almost each day's doings, howsoever grave, were interrupted by kennel yaps below both gangways.

"*Order, ORDER, ORDER,*" cried the Speaker.

It may be safely assumed that the Tory young bloods were moved solely by ideas of sport.

Appeals were shot upon the Speaker, now from Dr Tanner, now from Mr Long—waspish appeals.

Lord Randolph, a master very early in life of the fine art of being charmingly insolent, flew at the highest quarry, and has often been heard to say that of all the sport known to the hunter of big game there was none comparable to the pleasure of "drawing Gladstone."

The badger-baiters on the Tory benches in the Eighties derived an exactly relevant measure of delight in "drawing Tanner."

Of course the pleasure derived from an unequal conflict palls in time, and it was eventually agreed by the Tory young bloods to "drop Tanner." The doctor himself also grew tired of his part in the contest, and in his later years so much moderated his transports as to be called dull. He retained the oil for an occasional "low flash," as when, for example, he defied Mr Lowther's ruling and acted upon the orders.

to leave the House with the retort, “Certainly, Mr Lowther. I leave it with more pleasure than I ever enter it, and just now I have never left it with more pleasure.” That, accompanied by a Parthian smile, was a very naïve display of political insolence.

There used to be some very fascinating displays of insolence from the Fourth Party below the gangway. I recall one night when, after paralysing Gladstone’s Government for ten hours, Sir John (then Mr) Gorst rose and in his most cynical dilettante tones simulated surprise at the expostulation of the Grand Old Man :—

“Our desire, sir, has been to assist her Majesty’s Government.”

There was a loud, long, thunderous protest from the teeming Liberal benches. But it stood its ground as a rare bit of political insolence.

Again, that was a charming touch of Mr Curzon’s style of insolence when he spoke of the value of quasi-inspired paragraphs as “an intelligent anticipation of events.” There is a recordable bit of insolence at the expense of Mr T. G. Bowles, that the “least dull part” of his speech was that in which he read extracts from my [George Curzon’s] inconsequential writings on the Far East.* Only an aristocrat of aristocrats could have ventured to say such a thing.

Its delicacy made Sir William Harcourt chortle, and Mr John Morley, with his Rabelaisian fancy

and neatness of literary retort, laugh for a good five minutes. And this personal variety of aristocratic insolence is the more interesting variety of the two. There must be breeding in it and breeding at the back of it to make it go down, however.

The insolence of some of our M.P.'s is as thick as Tewkesbury mustard. It was not, however, at all bad or ill-flavoured insolence when the Government having been overruled on the wearing of the green, Mr W. Redmond, reminding the House how he had been turned into the street for doing what the Queen had decided should be done, asked if "the Government did not intend to apologise to him for a wrong."

Nor was Mr Powell Williams's maladroit suggestion to Captain Donelan as to the addition of a butcher to the Treasury Bench, in order to answer the questions of Irish members on the meat served out to the troops.

But it is only in France that ridicule kills, else in England Sir Ellis Ashmead Bartlett would have died years ago.

Mr Chamberlain, though not an aristocrat in his insolence, can do very well in the insolent rôle. There is a charm in aristocratic insolence. It is a finished thing. Mr Chamberlain's form is a little different. It lacks manner as well as character. There is not the haughty look, the consciousness of personal and caste superiority, so indispensable to

the fine art of being rude. Mr Chamberlain has acquired the art of staring blankly at a man whom he was introduced to an hour ago.

Mr Chaplin is really too much afraid of the House of Commons to be insolent.

But political insolence is a quality that comes of birth, and cannot be made. No doubt this is as it should be. There was a fine flavour in the insolence with which Sir Michael Hicks-Beach met Mr Steadman's request to know why a certain fustian deputation was not received at the Treasury.

"Because," said the Gloucestershire baronet and the author of the "open door," "even at the risk of war"—"because I will not receive in my room people who insult my Government outside of my room."

That is a fine commentary upon the boasted terrorism of the democracy, and it beautifully illustrates a courage in insolence to which a Radical statesman would, I fear, have been scarcely equal.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

**HOUSE OF COMMONS MARRIAGES ; OR, THE PROFITS
OF MATRIMONY.**

WE now come to a romantic aspect of parliamentary life. Next to the advantage of receiving office is the advantage of getting married. Of course this observation applies to the politician who makes a parliamentary career a pure matter of business. We have it on high authority that politics can be made to pay. It would not be easy, though it would be at the worst but a labour of time (not beyond the boy in the back office), to reach an exact sum which, in hard cash paid quarterly less income-tax, was received by the late Mr Gladstone as the allowances of office. Of occupants of the Treasury Bench, the Minister who has done the best for himself by his public career is Mr Goschen. Sir William Harcourt has done wonderfully well, allowing for the time he has actually been in office. But this, of course, is because the posts which he has held have been of the highest—mainly

the 5000 - pounders — positions culminating in his famous Budget, and all of them positions admirably filled by the right hon. gentleman. These and other instances of the profit of politics are to the hand of the 'boy in the back office, or indeed of any labourer who would give a political turn to the workman's paradise—the Sunday afternoon — or indeed to the cottar's Saturday night.

But it is not to every politician to obtain office, however ardently he may desire to serve the Crown, or however zealously he makes a "business" career of politics. Mr T. W. Russell, Mr William Weodall, Sir Ellis Ashmead Bartlett, Mr Causton, Mr Powell Williams, Mr Ellison Macartney, Mr George Curzon, Sir Edward Grey, Sir E. Carson, and Mr Broadhurst are examples of gentlemen who have either realised or deserved preferment. On the other hand, we see a crowd of men like Mr Henniker Heaton, Mr Bartley, Mr Gibson Bowles, Mr T. Lough, Mr Lloyd-George, Sir Edward Gourley, Colonel Saunderson, Sir Donald Currie, whom nobody has ever thought of presenting with office. And why? Echo answers, Why! Hence we fall back upon our starting postulate, that next to the advantage of receiving office is the advantage of getting married.

It is curious to observe that the parliamentary wedding is now quite a function of every well-regulated session. Indeed the parliamentary wedding

is an institution of the season. Formerly the rarest thing known to London society was the marriage of a member of Parliament. We live differently nowadays. Marriage formerly came next to the selection of a profession, where a profession of the regulation type was desirable; in other cases it followed the grand tour, which signalled departure from the university. A young gentleman appointed to a seat in the House of Commons was usually equipped with a wife in advance of his election. At that time, indeed, marriage was a duty which no gentleman could shirk, so that it became the rule that every new member, however young, entered political life a family man. His duty to his constituents did not suffer from the distraction of a doubtful courtship or the exacting frivolities of active betrothal. He took his place a perfect man, with all his honours of life about him—his fortune, his wife, and his seat in the House.

Lately, however, marriage has ceased to be regarded as one of the indispensable conditions to be faced by every young gentleman setting out in life. It is looked upon, in fact, as a responsibility to be put off as long as possible. Hence we have seen the extraordinary fact that while in one House of Commons there were approximately 100 unmarried members, there were in another House of Commons some 150 who had not yet submitted to the authority of Hymen. But no sooner does a man be-

come a legislator than he realises the inconvenience of a life of celibacy. It may not be actually said of him that he “pulls up” by getting married. That would be a libellous suggestion concerning a Chamber where all are honourable men, of matured morals and sedate. But the inconvenience is early pressed upon the bachelor legislator who, born into his new life filled with a conviction that the first prizes in the gift of the Crown may be his, promptly realises the disadvantage of being unmarried. So we get the parliamentary marriage, and, just as a practice grows by what it feeds upon, so the parliamentary marriage, arranged in the recess, is consummated at the altar in the full glory of the session.

And now to the advantage of it. The House of Commons is the best place on earth in which to make valuable friendships. A man must be, indeed, either an ascetic or of invulnerable pride who does not in an assembly so spiritually receptive find an open sesame to many doors. The House is, in a sense, a great Masonic lodge, where the spirit of equality is happily realised. Every one knows everybody else—certainly on the benches of his own political side ; and the mere duty of rubbing shoulders in the division lobbies forms a personal introduction to the shyest. Hence it happens that the bridegroom-elect, quite as a natural compliment to his brother members, sends to each in the usual way an “invitation” to his nuptials. We

know what follows! The whole of the gentlemen, whether married and with wives or daughters or otherwise, married or single, may not be able to attend, but they are represented — amongst the marriage-presents. Besides setting aside subscriptions to football, cricket, cycling, Dorcas, soup, and coal funds, every member feels bound to provide for one or more marriage-presents. In fact, the wedding-present is now a part of the annual expenditure incidental to a political career. In discussing this new pleasure in the crowded joys of the session with a genial baronet who sits for an eastern county division, I learned from him that he reckoned his disbursements under the head of wedding-presents last session alone had amounted to quite £300. Of course he is a man of wealth, and therefore of many friends who give substantially.

Moreover, it should also be observed that the late House was singularly and exceptionally rich in giving and taking in marriage. Members married other members' daughters to an extent rare in the history of any Parliament, while members have had an unusual disbursement of daughters and nieces, who, though going into the ranks of the non-elect for husbands, have nevertheless been of peasant interest to the parliamentary colleagues of parent or uncle. Now, when one considers that even in the Liberal party there are some 190 to draw upon, it will be seen that the

presents from this source alone should be both numerous and valuable. When, however, it happens to be an occupant of the Unionist benches, teeming, as these do, with some 400 members, we may realise at once the truth of our proposition, that next to the advantage of office is the advantage of getting married. Of course it will be understood that herein we imply no sordid or vulgar motives as underlying the parliamentary marriage timed to take place when the House is sitting. Love is above silver candlesticks, coffee-pots, or slippers—and it cannot wait. The explanation, of course, lies in the fact that marriage is now an affair of convenience rather than of family dictation and personal duty. But it is impossible for the bridegroom not to survey those crowded tables with agreeable equanimity.

CHAPTER XL.

THE M.P.'S WIFE.

I HAVE incidentally in a previous chapter made allusion to the M.P.'s wife. But the subject is worthy of more extended consideration.

The wife of the member of Parliament is a varying and sometimes a variable quantity. She is a quantity, sometimes a great quantity, which needs much and careful treatment. Her ambitions may be vastly ahead of her husband's. In fact, an ambitious woman is always a more potent force than an ambitious man.

The ambition of woman is not to be overreached, though she may overreach herself. Her aspirations laugh at barriers, and her tact keeps her on the right path strategically.

The wife of the M.P. is perhaps the most ambitious of all women. Of course it is necessary in laying down this declaration to put aside certain exceptions.

There are women, for example, that have been born

to high social state, so that in their case the M.P.-ship of the husband becomes a mere detail. There are also the women who, under the name of wife, fetch, catch, and carry for the labour members, albeit a band of most exemplary men, who are fortunate in the loyalty and assiduity of the partners of their bosoms ; and so long as the latter did toil—which they of course abandoned for the heavy intellectual graces of the Legislature — these faithful creatures shared their lords' labours.

But these exceptions aside, and we are left with the majority who emphasise the rule. That is to say, the most ambitious woman is the M.P.'s wife, and the M.P. in this instance is the legislator who owes his seat in Parliament to his own ambition and unaided exertions alone. He has got in with practically most things against him. He came a stranger to the constituency. His place of origin was some factory, or merchant's or other office. Happily he is a lawyer. He at anyrate did not set out upon his adventure as the cadet of some noble house with a great local or territorial influence at his back. He has not had, for instance, the assistance of a young, beautiful, and dashing wife.

It is said that when Lord Brooke (now Earl of Warwick) contested Colchester his wife won the seat. She drove him tandem fashion into the hearts of the electors. No one could resist Lady Brooke. Her

charm of manner carried all before her. She won alike voter and his wife. Her energies were tireless.

Again, Mr Edward Majoribanks (now Lord Tweedmouth) was carried to victory in his wife's *victoria*. Lady Fanny's ponies were irresistible when Lady Fanny held the ribbons. The presence of Lady Fanny's ponies at the door of the doubtful voter made it extremely difficult to give to another what that handsome, smiling, suasive, wheedling, charming woman asked for herself, or rather for her lord.

Then how much Sir Henry Stanley owes to his wife in his contest for the ward of Kennington, which he won, he can probably estimate better than any one. He is not an indifferent speaker, but he is perhaps at his best when on the Nile or the Congo. But as a candidate for a seat in Parliament the renowned explorer proved that it is much easier to penetrate the Forest of Perpetual Night than to reach the top of a Metropolitan election poll.

Sweet Dorothy Tennant came to the rescue. Her statuesque form shielded her doughty if somewhat diminutive lord. Her smiling face, brown sympathetic eyes, offered a foil to the gathering anger of her husband, irritated by the excessive heckling of some unbelieving Judas of the other persuasion.

• Sir Henry Stanley would probably have lost his chance of victory if he had been left to fight the election with a free hand. His wife stood between

her husband and trouble, or rather trouble melted before her presence.

The wife of the Hon. Arthur Brand, who sat in the Gladstone-Rosebery Parliament, is not only a popular speaker, but has the gift of song and impromptu, and, when the seat was won in 1891, sang many Tories out of their votes. "She supplied the polities first," said a chronicler, "and finished off with 'The Wearin' of the Green,' 'Thady O'Flynn,' or 'Off to Philadelphia.'" But though Mrs Brand helped to elect her husband against his Unionist opponent, it is not true that she penned this distich :—

"We'll put the Tories to the rout,
And shove old — up the spout."

Another lady who rendered her husband invaluable aid was Countess of Radnor, then Viscountess Folkestone. Lady Radnor was at that time one of our most distinguished amateurs whose performance at the piano invariably delighted hosts of Radicals.

When Mr M'Laren sat for Crewe he owed much to his wife, Miss Eva Muller, a sister of Miss Muller of school-board fame.

Mrs Leonard Courtney is another of the successful lady electjoneers.

But these are exceptional women. Such women would triumph anywhere, and there is no reason

why any woman should fret over unsatisfied aspirations. There is nothing so uncertain as political life.

The wife of the M.P. who has to struggle for her social distinction, or rely upon her husband's progress, comes of the class which is not of the empire of "blood," or of the empire of personal renown, or of the empire of letters or philanthropy.

The labour member is elected without any special trial of his own. He is machine-made, the child of the caucus of industry. He goes into Parliament with the grime of toil still clinging to face and hands. It is only when he makes a course of pilgrimages through Mr Herbert Gladstone's haircutting and wash-up rooms at the House that he slowly loses the halo of labour and presents himself to an astonished constituency as a man of quite another colour.

I could mention half-a-dozen of the chosen sons of the proletariat who have been washed clean and their manners trimmed and polished by the chiropodist of parliamentary custom.

The wives of these gentlemen have no ambition. Their last injunction to the departing senator is to catch the last bus or tram-car home "and drat the House."

These ladies do not seek distinction beyond their own cosy homes. Their salon is the porch. They

hold receptions behind the little iron gate on the narrow mosaic of the primitive forecourt. Happy, then, is the wife of the labour member, and happy withal is the labour member himself, who spurneth the swallow-tail of the patrician supper-hour, which is politely called dinner-time.

No. The woman who finds the hour of her trial in the election of her husband to the House of Commons is the wife of the wealthy parvenu. This lady has her work cut out for her, and she cuts out his work for her husband also. It is framed in ambition, ambition is the machinery, and ambition provides the motive power.

What a life, what a home is hers! Always calculating her chances, she never ceases for a moment of the long session to scheme for social distinction. She insists upon being taken to the Terrace that her lord may obtain for her introductions to his parliamentary colleagues, in the hope that these may bring her access to their families also.

The postman's knock is awaited with anxiety, and the letters it brings are too frequently disappointing. The cards to the reception of this fine lady and that finer lady are welcomed, but they provide little more than a crush, with a heated journey up a crowded staircase and a perilous journey back again.

The minor sirens of the party, espoused of the ambitions of the average M.P., throw open their

houses—too often flats—and bag a couple of statesmen as “decoy” ducks to secure the notice of the press paragraph writer in search of a possible speech from one of the two great men.

The respectable opulence of Portland Street, the refracted glories of Bryanston Square, the depressing monotony of Harley Street, or the pretentious pomposity of Ebury Street are sadly tried by the spaciousness of Berkeley Square or the lordly domination of Grosvenor Gardens.

It is not for the wife of the provincial borough M.P. that Grosvenor Square, Brooke Street, or Park Lane makes the social history of the town. The “at-homes,” the dinners, the dances, small and early, big and late, which break up the silence of the great west are not given that the wife of the average M.P. may be bidden.

It is obvious that the service M.P.’s wife is not born to the purple. Of course great wealth is the golden key to any of these houses, as I have shown in the chapter upon the financiers in Parliament.

This ambition paralyses the life and the home of the M.P.’s wife who typifies the majority. It is too often met by disappointment. It costs a great deal of money without yielding anything like the compensation hoped for.

The tendency of this ambition, moreover, is to increase the area of despair by sending to Parlia-

ment men who have no taste for the life. The only hope of the ambitious wife in such a case as this is in the collection of women after her own kind ; but the mind shrinks from the herding of ladies with the ambition of the minor gods and the retainers of Brixton Hill or Camden Town.⁴

CHAPTER XLI.

THE TORIES AS LIGHT CAVALRY.

For light Circassian attacks upon a Ministerial advance the Tories are very good, but they want "staying power." The law courts not long ago threw a grey side-light upon the habits of a noble lord who drank quinine all night and slept all day. But he cannot be taken as a type of the young modern with nothing to do. Three o'clock nowadays finds our golden youth nodding. They may sustain the racket an hour later upon a cigarette and a soda, but at four they are, in the expressive language of the set, "clean done," "utterly beat," — nay, physically "stony broke." No Conservative Opposition has ever succeeded in keeping the House of Commons sitting up against its will until five o'clock. The Nationalists do this sort of thing much better. To begin with, sleep to them is of little consequence. A man like Mr Healy, for example, will sleep with

one eye open, and be prepared to cry out "Rats" at any moment.

Obstruction culminating in the old days was managed by means of an elaborate nightly "plan of campaign." The party was organised into a series of reliefs. These reliefs, resting upon relays, came into action at fixed periods, the men whom they succeeded retiring to the coffee-room or ascending to the side galleries and lying down upon the benches. In this way the operations were kept going with freshness, because of the relays of reinvigorated operators. Not an inch of progress did the Government make; and the fight, which usually turned upon some point that Ministers declined to concede, invariably ended in the capitulation of the Treasury Bench. The "asides" were often extremely personal, too, as witness Mr O'Donnell's reproach to Mr Mundella after breakfast one morning, detected in what O'Donnell called the "gory stockings" of the Vice-President of the Council of Education, as sanguinary evidence of the intentions of the Government to destroy the Irish Opposition while in the discharge of a sacred duty.

The famous twenty-five hours' sitting on the South African Confederation Bill caught the *ménage* of the House unprepared for the struggle; and when breakfast came there was nothing to eat. Now, even an Irishman cannot fight upon an empty stomach, and

so the grilling question of the "larder" was carefully taken into account after this, and formed an integral part of the plan of campaign. A significant hint was conveyed to the purveyor to the House that "the sitting might be prolonged." The delicate euphemism was enough, and adequate supplies were laid in. In the course of the almost historic sitting, which technically swallowed up Wednesday in the sitting of Tuesday, when nearly 500 members were kept within call of the division bell, one cow, two sheep, and a pig were sacrificed. Obstruction makes its professors hungry. Over 300 breakfasts were served, each breakfast accompanied either with a steak or a chop. A cow and two sheep obviously would not remain very long intact in the face of a devouring host like that.

It was the sight of the mountains of beef and mutton cutlets that impressed the frugal mind of Mr Biggar with "a plan," should he ever come into power, for buying the "flesh meat" for the Commons under a contract. He did, as I have shown, come into power as a member of the Kitchen Committee, and he brought off a contract for 9d. a pound all round. The market at once rose, and the contractor is said to have blessed Mr Biggar, and to have also remembered the Kitchen Committee, the House, and all within it, in his nightly prayers and morning orisons.

To light and gay obstruction the Conservatives

bring a gallantry of their own. Radicals have never excelled at this game. The Nationalists possess higher powers of endurance, and perhaps there is more “bite” in their obstruction. Lord Randolph Churchill once laid it down in the House of Commons that the duty of an Opposition is to oppose. It is in Opposition that the light horsemen of the Tory party are seen at their best. They are indeed inimitable in the pretty fence of resisting inconvenient progress.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE PLEASURES OF PROROGATION.

THE pleasures of prorogation are manifested in a variety of forms, chiefly, it must be confessed, in the smiling features of Ministers. After all, it is her Majesty's Government that has most to gain by seeing the national flag lowered from the Victoria Tower, the big doors of Westminster closed, and the Macs placed in the Tower of London, where the Opposition, irrespective of party, would be glad to see the entire Administration cast by way of good old Traitor's Gate.

The Opposition has less to rejoice over. The long recess clears the Cabinet of the gadflies of party curiosity. There is a truce to awkward questions about China and the intentions of the Unspeakable One in Armenia. Mr Swift MacNeill is paralysed by the simple process of closing the House upon him. Mr Pickersgill ceases from troubling about people like our Civil servants, whom he cannot possibly benefit.

Mr Hanbury may snap his fingers at the “Postmaster-General for Greater Britain” (Mr Henniker Heaton), who still insists that his name should be telegraphed as “one word.” Mr Thomas Gibson Bowles is neatly laid out. Dr Clark is silenced. Mr Galloway Weir can no longer ask the Lord Advocate “if he is a *weir*,” which Mr Graham Murray thanks Providence he is not. Mr Gerald Balfour is freed from the inquisition of the Irish benches. Mr Labouchere is left to his congenial columns to prosecute his amiable inquiries about Rhodesia and the machinations of its dark presiding angel.

The Opposition chiefs, as I have said, find less reason for rejoicing. Sir William Harcourt holds that it is useless to assume an active policy before the Government of the day has been three years in office. It takes that period of time for the public to “find Ministers out,” as the Duke of Argyll said. It is useless, therefore, for an Opposition to be up and doing until the passage of the probationary period he has defined as ‘the time of criticism and discovery; but for all that, the session necessarily emphasises the bitterness of opposition. Every success achieved by the party in power deepens the shadow upon the party which has been so recently hurled from place.

There will come aggressive and obtruding reflections that some good opportunities have been missed by the “outs.” The knowledge that hated rivals in the form

of former colleagues, like Mr Chamberlain and Mr Goschen, have deepened their reputation in the very direction which was to have been their doom, adds to the discomfit and disappointment, and gives an impetus to those questionable emotions of envy, malice, and all uncharitableness.

The leaders of the Government have most to be thankful for just now. The session has been easy, and not unproductive. Some excellent social measures have been carried. The country is prosperous, the harvest is promiseful. The empire is at peace. Great Britain is unquestionably a greater Power at sea. Her voice in the councils of Europe is paramount. During the entire session the Opposition have failed to make one single step forward. The air of Parliament has certainly pulsated to the thundery mutterings of Opposition votes of no confidence ; but the Ministry has not only not been struck by the thunderbolts of the Jove of Meigle, but the projected motion has crumbled in the very hand that was to hurl it.

So we come back to our postulate.

Prorogation Day is a time of Ministerial rejoicing. It is a period of figs. Intellectually right Non. gentlemen are soothed with apples and appeased with ale. No one can smile like an Under Secretary of State who is about to be placed beyond the " heckling " of a Dillon, a Flynn, or a Francis Stevenson. Happy is the Secretary for India who escapes from " irrigation

at any *Price*." Mr Hanbury's naturally cherubic lineaments assume a seraphic contentment as he replies to the last questions of the session by the bores of the year. Mr George Christopher Trout Bartley is now in an Opposition of his own, sitting, like little Jack Horner, in a corner, but without the proverbial pie. He is in permanent revolt, and he gives one winding-up groan, like another despairing Diogenes in his tub (without apologies to Mr Courtney), at the demoralisation of the age parliamentary.

But Mr Balfour gaily smiles as he listens to his discontented colleagues' strictures upon the too free use of the closure as an aid to Government business. Mr Balfour can afford to be gay : he has got all he wanted. The "slaughter of the innocents" has been less than usual. The bills passed have been more numerous and of better quality. Not since the days of the Government of 1868, or rather since the time when Lord Palmerston was "in," have there been so many "counts"—in fact, the House would do credit to any German "count" factory. Think of it! Moreover, only one Saturday sitting in the entire session, as compared with five in the session of 1893, when Mr Gladstone was Premier. The legislative machine has worked with almost unexampled smoothness, while the inter-sessional holidays have been longer and more enjoyable than we ever remember them to have been.

No one could better have typified the pleasures of

prorogation than did the Attorney-General recently. He came down on the day of rejoicing a picture of festal intent. His episcopal limbs were clad in blue, and his diocesan features, irradiated with the bloom of a red necktie and a smile, were shaded by a straw hat with a tricolour band. He was instinctively eloquent of the sea. His eye seemed to be lit with the graces of the "Saucy Sally" or the "Lively Polly"; and as he hummed in his walk across Palace Yard, it might have been--

"My boat is on the shore,
My barque is on the sea."

Never was a grave and severe representative of the legal authority of the Crown more suggestive of the briny, or recalled so gaily the triumph of the pirate that sang—

"All that I see upon the seas
I seize upon."

As the clerk of the House of Lords trolled off the formula of Royal assent to those hundred bills, first in English and then in Norman French, he went blithely upon his way. "La Reine le vult"—"The Queen wills it"—he spoke the joy of official and Sovereign.

The Speaker, too, smiled and chortled. Even Mr Redmond seemed to share in the breadth of satisfaction diffused by the pleasure of prorogation. For the last

State ceremony of this year, good, gallant, old General Sir Michael Biddulph summoned the Commons to the bar of the Peers, wearing his general's full uniform, all his orders laid on, his trusty sword clanking at his heels, and his cocked hat, with its plume of red and white cock's feathers, under his arm. His fine martial face was an odd study withal, between his sense of the pleasures of prorogation and his desire to remember the formulary of his message.

That the Speaker's clerk should have forgotten to have a copy of the Queen's Speech upon the table, which it is necessary to read for accuracy' sake when the Commons return from the Gilded Chamber, is only one further proof of the pleasures of prorogation. Finally, the arrival of Mr Redmond in a billycock hat, forty minutes after the prorogation was over and the session done with, went to prove that, while sharing the prevalent thankfulness, the hon. gentleman was too absorbed in gay intentions to share the responsibilities of his station.

No one fails to smile in response to the pleasures of prorogation, unless it be those M.P.'s who find their happiness begin and end with the session. These may be enumerated as that solemn unit of public life, Mr Donal Sullivan, who sits upon a back bench in hermetic silence from February to August, his "stable companion," Mr MacAlessc, who now and then is moved to "ask a question"; there is Mr Channing—

how does the gentle Channing without the House?—Mr Caldwell, too, and Sir Charles Dilke, ever on the restless pace from House to library, and library to House; Dr G. B. Clarke, with his limited purview and unlimited “gab”; Mr Galloway Weir—what of his feelings?—and Mr Thomas Lough, and Mr E. J. C. Morton, and Sir Ellis Ashmead Bartlett, who find in “the House” the Earthly Paradise. To these hunters of cheap pleasures and immortality the recess was an approximation to the Jesuits’ purgatory.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE REAL LORD SALISBURY,

LORD SALISBURY will continue to live as a memorable individuality long after many new Parliaments have come and gone. In that light I treat him as one of the greatest figures of our time, which is also his time.

Age is laying its hand heavily upon the Conservative leader, who is no longer the raven-bearded Goliath we have known in the master of Hatfield. But there is no ageing of the splendid intellectual vitality, which, if it be changed at all, is⁹ toward a sharpening of its action. Lord Salisbury is now a white-headed, white-bearded man. Old he can never be. His presence upon any platform is a certificate to that. He has always been the political figure of the day when he has stepped forth into some engagement.

There is, indeed, no figure in politics of more commanding interest than that of the Marquis of Salisbury. The popular value of our public men is just determined by what their speeches will fetch to the

papers or the news agencies that publish them. When Mr Gladstone unfortunately passed away it was the complaint of one of the news agencies that it had lost its most remunerative source in the work of special reporting. The manager of that news agency was an out-and-out follower of the member for Mid-Lothian. Lord Salisbury and Lord Rosebery would sell for nearly as much as Mr Gladstone, but they did not speak so frequently.

Sir William Harcourt's jokes and Mr John Morley's epigram factory were never good in a general way for more than a column report. But against all competition Lord Salisbury has stood, year in and year out, what is known as a "full-report" speaker.

I will not say what in the trade this exactly means, but it comes very near to being a verbatim report.

Let me add that after his retirement from public life Lord Randolph Churchill's public speeches had no remunerative value, and were seldom put upon the market.

There was, it may be admitted, a certain fitness in the descendant of Robert Cecil—himself of that ilk—seeing out as Prime Minister also another Lady Sovereign of these realms. The kingdom of Queen Victoria no doubt is a very different thing from the kingdom of Queen Elizabeth. The two greatest queen monarchs this hoary old land of ours has ever seen are curiously linked by their respective Premiers

over a void of three centuries, and yet in the same family.

Macaulay, in his account of Elizabeth's Minister and his times, assigns to Robert Cecil, Lord Burleigh, a place with the Walpoles, the Pelhams, and the Liverpools; not with the St Johns, the Carterets, the Channings, and the Cannings. To the same station Robert Cecil, Marquis of Salisbury, may be linked. There was not room in one Government for an Elizabeth and a Richelieu. If we found a place for Lord Salisbury amongst the Premiers of the Queen's reign, it would be in close association with such dutiful memories as Derby and Disraeli. He has certainly nothing in common with the nonchalance of Lord Palmerston, who would note points in foreign policy in the fly-leaf of a betting book. He displays little of Melbourne's gaiety, and little of Beaconsfield's rashness. Lord Salisbury hates war, and resembles the British householder who sees disorder on his door-step.

Lord Salisbury, in fact, must be put in his place as an uneasy first amongst England's better-known statesmen.

There is no public man about whom more remarkable illusions have eddied. He is widely regarded as a baron of the most feudal type, a despot, an unyielding bigot, a person cloaked in the gloomy grandeur of his own ancestry, and deplorably ignorant of the people of England.

Personally Lord Salisbury is a man of lively family

sympathies. Lord Salisbury is an excellent citizen and a liberal employer. Yet he does not, and never can, understand England in regard to many subjects of social reform.

Lord Salisbury is not fond of society, and plays his part rather with urbane dignity. His private pursuits are reading and practical chemistry. He is self-contained and reserved. His reserve might be called shyness. He is a kindly man.

The extraordinary feature of Lord Salisbury's statesmanship, excepting its faith in the Church and the crops, is that it rests upon no traditional canons.

Its basis is England, and its motto is peace and prosperity, and a very good motto too.

But it lacks what we may call scientific training.

In Parliament he is a Tory of the Tories, and he was ever to the front when mischief brewed. In the House of Commons as Lord Robert Cecil he began a career which has become illustrious. He found Mr Disraeli difficult to get on with. He supported the amendment to the motion in which "Tear 'em" (Mr Roebuck) sought to impeach Lord Palmerston and his Government for the long-passed horrors of the Crimean war mismanagement. In doing so, Lord Robert displayed something of keen invective by characterising Mr Roebuck's motion as wearing "the aspect of acrimonious and vindictive personality." But Mr Disraeli did otherwise, and to this cleavage

in sentiment we perhaps owe the subsequent fissure which opened in the famous "gibes and jests" scene. Lord Robert Cecil became Lord Cranborne; he won' Government rank, entered the Cabinet of Lord Derby, and shared in the bitterness of the Reform struggles. Mr Disraeli, announcing the resignation of three of his colleagues, told the House that he regretted the loss of but one of his colleagues, and that one he made clear--or at any rate the lobbies, the great interpreters of the oracles, made it clear--was not Lord Cranborne, the Secretary for India. Lord Cranborne opposed household suffrage, and in an eloquently invective address he asked scornfully what would be said of them if, after what they had avowed a year ago, "they became the instruments of engrafting household suffrage pure and simple upon the constitution of this country." He later described Mr Disraeli's policy as "a policy of legerdemain," and as involving "political betrayal which has no parallel in our parliamentary annals." "He had seen," he said, with "enormous astonishment," that the Household Suffrage Bill was proclaimed a "Conservative triumph." Years later Mr Disraeli, then Lord Beaconsfield, took a well-nourished revenge through the Public Worship Bill, when he described the Marquis of Salisbury, who had opposed the measure, as a "great master of gibes and flouts and jeers."

The funny part of this outbreak is historically that

Lord Salisbury was a member of Lord Beaconsfield's Cabinet at the time. But Lord Salisbury had *his* revenge, too, as a 'Saturday Reviewer,' though as a 'Quarterly Reviewer' he adhered to orthodox lines.

When Lord Salisbury sits down after making a speech in the Upper House one feels that he has said, and in the best style, all that is to be said on the subject from that side. The literary finish of his speeches is their charm. Every word, too, is made to tell by that steel-clasp-like utterance. Lord Salisbury essentially is a destructivist, and his articulation, clear and metallic, might be said to cut grooves for the passage of his words.

Lord Salisbury has a strong domestic side to his character. He loves his home, and is never really happy when away from Hatfield.

He believes, amongst other good things, in going to bed early. Rising is another matter. But when he had his family as a whole about him, and they were resident in Arlington Street, the noble Marquis, returning from a late debate, would frown if he were to see evidence that one of his sons was still abroad. A lecture awaited that young scion in the morning.

No leader ever knew so little of his following, and it became the business of the private secretaries to give assurance of personal interest in every Tory individuality. Lord Salisbury shook hands with his followers in "another place" vicariously.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE GENTLE LIFE OF MR BALFOUR.

DRIFTING reminiscences have passed through the papers of the doings of the Leader of the House since Parliament was prorogued. They illustrate in a pleasing and natural manner the gentle life of the Leader. Now he is staying with that courtly gentleman and pretty wit, Lord Elcho, at his Gloucester home. Mr Balfour has taken that fine new "bike," which has the merit of going up a hill without being propelled and coming down again without back-pedalling at all. Next he is at Bayreuth, absorbed in the seraphic joys of the musical festival, anon relieving his soul by a morning upon the improvised links of that incarnation of sweetness and light, North Berwick or St Andrews.

As in a ship, everything comes to him that waits—everything from a darning-needle to an anchor, from a copy of Aeschylus to a set of artificial teeth; so at Bayreuth the English statesman who desires to

play golf finds the things as they drifted, or as they stood, or as the junta on the Treasury Bench wished to drive them.

"Why so much hurry?" peevishly interrogates Mr Seton-Karr.

"You have awakened us Tories too soon," wheezes Mr Bartley, in the voice of the sluggard.

"Give me another coil of rope," gently sighs Cap'n Thomas Bowles, M.M., "that I may the more easily close my 'dead lights' for another dog-watch."

Mr Balfour listens with a seraphic smile as he sits upon the small of his back, his legs neatly and wonderfully coiled upon the table opposite, his head resting about the nape of the neck upon the ridge of the Treasury Bench behind, and his eyes gazing pensively into the amber glow of the fanlight in the ceiling. He had been accused of spending his mornings over a French novel instead of upon the order-book of the day.

His offence was multiplied by the discovery that he was unable to describe the proposals of his own bills, and by his crimes of omission!

It is a world of surprises, and yet no man is surprised at anything. The self-sustaining resources of mutual accommodation are so distributed that no man wants for anything, unless it be a really well-regulated conscience. And this rarest jewel of the age the Leader of the House of Commons^{*} perhaps can offer

the serious investigator as near perfection of water and light as any living public man could desire.

The nearest approach to a "feather" in the perfect form of the gem is a gentle tendency towards humbug. But, speaking generally, it may be said of Mr Balfour as it was said of Mr Gladstone by Mr Disraeli, that his is a character "unrelieved by one single vice." To most epicures in the new morality a man with a character of that plastic nature must, no doubt, suggest a slice of cold curate. But as cold curate is not known to the *menu* of the "Prince's," the "Berkeley," or even of the N. L. C.—where, by the way, they are ready to dine off roast bishop at any time—it is unnecessary to pursue this aspect of the remoter possibilities of Mr Balfour's character, or even of Mr Balfour himself. We are content to leave ourselves alone in the peaceful contemplation of our own text—the gentle life of Mr Balfour.

In the 'Whitehall Review,' rather more than a year ago, the present writer discussed, with such capacity for judicial treatment as he may have been providentially endowed with, the then somewhat aggressive question, Had Mr Balfour failed as a leader? Things had not been going quite well with the Government, quoth the wise men at the gates of the Liberal Cave of Adullam. There was a little dissatisfaction also upon the Unionist benches. Mr Seton-Karr, Mr Bowles, Mr Bartley, Mr Courtney,

Sir James Fergusson, and the good "Sir Ellis" were not enthusiastic when his crimes of omission were finally crowned by an inability to remember the constituencies for which his own supporters sat. They laughed when they heard Mr Labouchere turn round to Mr Causton and, in delicious irony, speaking of his own leader, ask, "Where does he sit for?" or drily stop in the middle of an argument under the correctional impulse of the House, indignant that Mr Morley should any longer be described as the "right hon. gentleman the member for Newcastle," and cry, "Who are you *now?*" or when he persisted in addressing Mr Asquith as "My right hon. friend the member for---for---for what is it?" But the Unionist supporter of his leader, when he heard himself miscalled, or his identity put into the pestle and mortar of that alchemist, the Secretary to the Treasury, went out with rage in his heart, if not with disgust in his eyes. We, however, met all this with the comforting advice to malcontents to wait. They did wait. The iron in due time entered Mr Balfour's soul; and when he next met Parliament he not only had learned to fit every one of his supporters with the name of his constituency, but he was a master of the whole Government programme, and "Mr Balfour from day to day" ceased to be correlative with bungling and unreadiness over the concurrent business of the House.

But all this super-exertion had not for a moment disturbed the even tenor of Mr Balfour's quiet life. He did not even get up an hour earlier. He had breakfast in bed just as usual. All he did, instead of turning over upon the other side, was to read the order-book for the day, seat questions and Mr Hanbury's provision of the bills for the sitting. He also took lessons in nomenclature by means of an illustrated list of his supporters. But for the rest, his life was undisturbed, unloaded, unbroken, neither clouded by doubt, philosophic or otherwise, nor shocked ; the foundation of his belief in himself and the æsthetic rectitude of his pet amusements unshaken. His soul moved in a gentle empyrean of sonatas, in fresh air, on the links of North Berwick or St Andrews, and now and then varied by a skip through a French novel or down the pages of a new poem.

Mr Balfour realises in its purely academic sense the expression gentleman. He is a gentle man.

His moods are soft and his address full of courtliness and forbearance. Even in the stress and storm of debate there is never any devil in his part in the fight. He is dialectic. He appeals only to the higher intellectual instincts. Casuistic he has never been—Jesuitic could never become. In his conflicts with Mr Gladstone he has confessedly been shocked by “the old man's thumpers,” his new versions of ‘old

faiths, his opportunism, and his facility, as Lord Randolph Churchill said, for proving that white was black and black no colour.

Mr Balfour is never angry. He is only filled with sorrow that such things can be said.

He is astonished at the wickedness of man, pained by the perversity of partisanship, grieved by the fiendish instinct for making things seem what they are not.

Mr Balfour's gentle life outside of the House of Commons is made up of fresh air and light reading.

He is a butterfly of the lighter philosophy. His favourite realm is of music and art. A possible Prime Minister at a pianoforte may suggest a curious picture to the Radical slogger. A partiality for the works of Sir Edward Burne-Jones bespeaks a delicate palate out of harmony with a traditional taste for government.

"My bill is on the table, my bike is at the door," forms the burden of Mr Balfour's thoughts when the spring is budding and the House is sitting.

No golfer is more indulgent to his "caddie." No golfer is less troubled by the beseemlies of the gentle craft. He will go forth negligent in costume, and will wait for his shot rather than resort to the imperious clack of the autocrat of the links, and thus order away the loungers who may stand in the line of his fire.

Like a Charterhouse boy, he disdains a hat wherever possible. He will play on the breezy links of St

Andrews so that all who pass by may cry, “Who’s your hatter?” for Mr Balfour seems not to have one. But there is nothing wonderful in his play, which is attuned to his own gentle life. There are more efficient performers, and it is clear that he loves the game for itself and not for the joys of beating others. He is as satisfied to be beaten as he is to come off victor.

His music is chosen from works of Mendelssohn because it is in harmony with his spirit, just as the paintings of Sir Edward Burne-Jones find attractions for his eye beyond the canvases of a Leighton, a Millais, a Herkomer, though he has examples of each. As a host, this gentle life comes into all Mr Balfour does.

At Whittinghame he is charming, and the house is liberty hall.

“Be happy,” says the entertainer, “and never mind me.”

And this injunction soon crystallises into a rule. The host will bike and make music, and read as an example to others. When the spirit of music is upon him, though the hour be amongst the very earliest, he will go down to the drawing-room, and, with bedroom candle by his side, will live with Mendelssohn until the candle expires, and then he will return to bed and sleep half through the day.

These are quoted, however, as possible legends, which, if true, or if not true, do not necessarily prejudice our postulate of Mr Balfour’s gentle life.

CHAPTER XLV.

MR CHAMBERLAIN.

MR CHAMBERLAIN must be always regarded as the triumph of unaided ambition. He was on the outset of his political career without a patron. By every Tory gentleman he was distrusted. His famous speech about the Tory landlords paying ransom for the past made him the bogey in the nursery of a thousand noble scions.

He came like tho man in the epitaph ; nobody knew, and would go where nobody cared. He was tainted with Republicanism ; was brilliant only in Birmingham, a rich place without art, and saved only by being represented by John Bright.

For years the dowagers were aghast at this man's pretensions. His name made them scream ; and his advance caused the propertied classes to look to the priming of their blunderbusses.

It was a most extraordinary time for Joseph Cham-

berlain and all his brethren. But he pushed on bravely, smilingly, defiantly.

I recall him a plutocrat, a manufacturer, and the best-dressed man in the House of Commons. He was always cheerful. Sitting at the end of the second bench below the Opposition gangway—the Tories were in power then—he made long speeches, one dealing, if I remember rightly, with the wrongs of the Transvaal.

It is curious, is it not, that Mr Chamberlain should have made his early fame in Birmingham as “Puff” in the ‘Critic’? He was a capital Puff, too, declares a compatriot of those days. It was as an amateur, truly, but the amateur would speedily have developed into the professional.

Born in that suburb of distilled respectability, Camberwell, Mr Chamberlain went to Birmingham, the seat of his father’s competency, to learn the art and mystery of making screws.

In municipal life he throve until he passed the chair, and while yet serving the burgesses so, Mr Chamberlain entertained the Prince and Princess of Wales at Highbury Moor, his now almost equally famous home in the Midlands. Never did a more finished example of “London Assurance” turn up in a more simple-minded, if prosperous, community.

Mr Chamberlain was a great parliamentary success. Sir Charles Dilke took him up and helped

him really into Cabinet rank before he had even be-thought him of the pot-hooks and ladles of Government. He was marked for progress. People read his speeches and noticed a business-like fluency in them, a "shop-counter" way of treating back-place subjects somewhat as that shopman treats customers whom he induces to buy what they have not thought of, and thus approves himself an artist at his business.

Any one can sell a customer what he wants, but not what he doesn't want.

Mr Chamberlain brought a style to Parliament in debate which we see adopted by Mr Asquith, Mr Birrell, Mr Haldane, Sir R. T. Reid.

He has at the same time played many parts. Beginning as a Tory, he became a Republican, then a Radical of the most solid hue and aim, next a Liberal Unionist, and once again an unadmitted Tory. I remember a well-known member of the Ministry of a former Parliament, then one of the most violent of Mr Chamberlain's opponents, saying in the lobby, "The idea of a d—d Republican wearing an eyeglass."

But Mr Chamberlain took up the eyeglass when he adopted Puff and has never dropped it.

Yet to-day he is almost at the top of a party whose instincts are Tory and territorial. The Prince and Princess of Wales visit him and his wife. He

has a son, an early political friend in Mr Jesse Collings, and another in Mr Powell Williams in the Administration, and he is the inventor of the phrase applied to the Liberal Unionists as “the gentlemen of England.”

But Mr Chamberlain is purely bureaucratic. He is of the town exclusively. He does not understand country life and has no sympathy with it. He cannot ride, drive, fish, or shoot. His friends predicted he must die twenty years ago. He has helped to bury several of them.

He stoops in his walk, and walks as little as possible. His diet is promotive of uric acid, and John Burns has spoken of him as an acidulated political drop.

Mr Chamberlain is no humbug. He has taken a magnificent revenge upon the obloquy of the duchesses of the past who shuddered at his name. He has made himself feared. There is no one to equal him in debate or audacity on the Treasury Bench. It may be true that he is selfish. But at least he is selfish on the right lines. He has got the lead out of the hands of those who, as they drove, spat his way and berayed him with dust.

It is different now.

As to his selfishness from another point of view; well, he always stands by his friends. He did not forget those who went with him into the chalk dunes

of the Home Rule disruption. John Morley ought not to have a hard word for Chamberlain, and Charles Dilke has not. For Sir William Harcourt he has a beaming affection.

He has few scruples in public life. His opponents are aware of this. Some are foolish enough to draw him, but too slow to clear his claws. A Radical once summed him up thus: "He is rich enough not to be on the make, and vain enough to seek a small office—a groom of the stole."

Mr Chamberlain is most dangerous when most polite. He is in this respect a combination of Chucks the boatswain and Richard III. He may indeed say with the latter, "I can smile, and murder while I smile." Mr Chamberlain's later style is his newest. It is a style compounded of suppressed force. When Joseph's voice is low and persuasive, Joseph means murder. When he plays the *role* of the injured innocent, look out for "ruetions." Just now Mr Chamberlain is playing the part of the injured innocent; the man who is wilfully misunderstood; the apostle of sweetness and light. It is thus that, rhetorically speaking, we have Joseph in a dark cloak, a mask, and holding ready for use the midnight dagger and the poisoned bowl.

In the summer afternoon the erstwhile ogre of Birmingham is to be seen bowing at the side of princesses or handing tea to duchesses on the Terrace.

He is an entirely changed character—whether a reformed one or not is a question which the curious reader should address to— Well, sometimes the criticised and the critic may be sitting on the same benches again.

CHAPTER XLVI.

ANOTHER TYPICAL CLASSMAN.

THE brightest, the lightest, the gayest, and the liveliest of all the Ulster brigade is the hon. and gallant member who sits for North Armagh. One might sing of Colonel Saunderson as the "fine old Irish gentleman." He instinctively recalls the Irish better days that have gone. He is virile of the novels of Charles Lever. One sees in this jovial, racy, swaggering, light-hearted, fighting⁹ and tireless Irish Tory once a tireless Irish Liberal, a reminiscence of a former Dublin and the merry nights at the old Kildare Street Club. Of what songs he seems capable, of what pranks, of what gallant⁹ fights, of what practical jokes, of what immeasurable depths of fun !

One can see him in ~~taney~~ in the typical Irish days leading a brave little gang of choice spirits warmed by a bowl of hot punch. The road lies down Sackville Street, over the bridge, and through Grafton Street,

It is the day of the jolly old "Charley" and of the dim and flickering oil-lamp.

Crisp and brief sounds the watchman's rattle as, amid a shriek of laughter, the guardian of the peace of the night disappears face downward under his overturned sentry-box. When light dawns the haberdasher finds where his trade sign of the shorn lamb stood at bedtime the pole of the neighbouring barber replaces it, the pestle and mortar of the apothecary has given place to the shorn lamb, and the sign of the apothecary is discovered after a long search over the window of the man of razors.

The hon. member for North Armagh has been likened to a combination in one person of Sir William Harcourt and Sir Wilfrid Lawson. The parallel is not without a certain amount of force, though it does not sufficiently take account of Colonel Saunderson's own individuality, while at the same time setting up a curious point of comparison between the two Sir W.'s. There is, undoubtedly, more than the wit and roguishness of one Irishman in the famous Orange champion, though there is little of the Irishman in either Sir William Harcourt or Sir Wilfrid Lawson. Orthodox or timid members would probably rush in alarm from any conceivable "trouble" of the doughty knight of Malwood, and the majority are probably agreeable that Sir Wilfrid should be the monopolist of his own "gay wisdom." The unsuspecting or partially

informed outside politician, again, might perhaps take alarm at the prospect of a man who has not only his own devil to go upon but is stuffed with the sardonic virtues of two other men—and such men—conceiving him to be an undesirable person to have in any assembly ; but, as a matter of fact, Colonel Saunderson is a really enjoyable individual, and a most welcome member of the Assembly, which could ill spare him. None but himself could fairly be his parallel.

Colonel Edward James Saunderson is a tall, well-made, good-looking, dashing man of sixty-four. His face is one of the most striking in the House, and he would probably have been described by the late Mr Biggar as a “foreign-looking gent.” Properly or appropriately caparisoned, he would lend himself readily to a counterfeit presentment of Don Quixote. In fact, he would have been Cervantes’s *beau idéal* of his famous hero. A century ago Colonel Saunderson would have been the Cassagnac, the Sir Lucius O’Trigger, of his day, the champion of a cause which was honoured with special attack, and needed special defence. The times are prosaic now, and truculent epithets are bandied from one to another in the House of Commons without doing more hurt than a collision between two errant flicks of thistle-down. But a century ago Colonel Saunderson would have gone into Hyde Park very much earlier than he is in the habit of going there now, and for a very different purpose.

He is distinctly a fighter, and he never rises in the House but with the definite object of tilting at the windmill of Irish rhetoric. He is the fighting paladin of the Orange party, and the best outside debater that Mr Balfour can call to his aid. He is certainly the leader of the Irish Tories, and has more brains than the entire body have among them, and can put more power into a single sentence than they can put into half-a-dozen speeches.

His opposition to the Home Rule Bill on behalf of the "loyal minority of the North" became quite historic. It was in this crisis that Colonel Saunderson found a strange ally ; that ally was Mr William Johnston of Ballykilbeg. Mr Johnston announced his intention of fighting to the death in resisting the disintegration of the empire, and the picture of the meek Ballykilbeg taking the field with musket proved too much for the Irish members. Mr Johnston is a combination of Sancho Panza and the late Mr Newdegate ; and Mr Healy's sardonic imagination pictured to the House the vision of the hon. member for South Belfast lurking behind hedges at the end of a musket and calling this war !

But there was a good deal of fooling about this time, nor was it confined to persons of the political level of Mr William Johnston, but it possessed the souls even of such eminent personages as General Lord Wolseley and Lord Randolph Churchill. Each

of these patriotic Uncle Tobies talked a great deal of treacle and brimstone, of putting themselves at the head of 40,000 Loyalists and marching south—with, perhaps, Mr Johnston as Chaplain-General of the Forces. A speech by Lord Randolph Churchill was followed, through a sinister coincidence, by rioting in Belfast between the Orange party and the Nationalists.

From these foolish or indiscreet doings, however, Colonel Saunderson managed to hold aloof. He contented himself with bitter argument, the more biting the better it was for his purpose, and withal the more to his taste. He is absolutely uncompromising in the destructive structure of his philippies. His style—like his voice, his face, his demeanour—is full of expression. When “Saunderson’s up” every member in the House, every lounger in the smoke-room, every voluptuary in the dining-room, every ascetic in the tea-room, every fuddled whisky-tippler at the bars in the lobbies, knows that hot blood will soon be brewing, and fierce expletives be flying across the House.

Some one once said that Professor Stuart’s life had been “one long public meeting.”

The political career of Colonel Saunderson has been one of continuous fighting. He is a Gatling gun constantly distributing confusion. His sentences are complete discharges. They never miss fire, unlike

the British Gatling ; and the supply appears unlimited. He gave a specimen of his quality lately. Nevertheless, the Irish members rather like the valiant master of Castle Saunderson, who is known as a good landlord, though regarded by some as a political bigot, and who is as brave in action as he is gentle and forgiving in peace. His greatest pleasure is to get Sir William Harcourt or Mr Morley on the grill of some long-abandoned and discreetly-forgotten declaration.

CHAPTER XLVII.

MR TIMOTHY HEALY.

THE new “union of hearts” has almost annihilated Mr Healy upon the breast of Ireland. How long the union will last is uncertain at this moment. “Mr Healy,” duly remarked a friend, “what do you say to its lasting just as long as it takes to reach the general election?”

The reply ended or was frustrated by the suddenly discovered need for a penny postage-stamp.

But if the union should be assisted by the member for North Louth, all the better for union. Many men, it is an open secret, have fought for the reversion of Mr Parnell’s position. Of these men Mr Timothy Healy was the most earnest, consistently mutinous, and irrepressibly active. Mr Dillon would have told you that Healy’s policy is Healyism, but no one can plumb Healyism.

But this was not a correct new version of ‘Japhet in Search of a Father.’

When the session came to a close before the reunion, Mr Healy was asked how he intended to pass the recess.

"Oh, quietly," was the reply, "until the Convention. Then things will hum."

Mr Healy has sat in Parliament since 1880. His character is unchanged, apparently because unchangeable. He is the Ursa Major of polities — rascish, dangerous. If you scratch a Russian, says the story-book, you find a Tartar. Mr Healy is akin to the Russian and the Tartar. But this is true only of his public career. It is not true also of his family hearth. The man is lovable at home.

His manner is brusque to those who come in contact with him in the parliamentary lobbies. He is a wit, and stands alone on the Irish side as a humorist of the sardonic type. He is simply splendid where he lets himself go. He has all the devil of the Nationalist party, and is their Colonel Sanderson. He will fill the House.

That Mr Healy should be a little vain is not remarkable for these things ; but even ability may become oppressive in years, and one thirsts for just a little commonplace courtesy at times.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

A PALADIN OF THE TURF.

TALL and lean, clean shaven and of healthy visage, Mr James Lowther, who carried York city at twenty-five, might very well have been mistaken for a trainer. He is of the turf most turfy. He embodies the Jockey Club as well as all the best traditions of the turf. Nature has even dressed up Mr Lowther for his part, and we have a gentleman who might have ridden and won his own Derby, but he has really never carried off the blue ribbon of the turf. Nor, it is added, has he ever made a bet.

His professed aim in supporting horse-racing is to improve the breed of horses in England.

For some years in the early period of M.P.-ship Mr Lowther was the best, or one of the best, reported members of the House of Commons. Now in the nadir of his parliamentary greatness and the full maturity of his experience he cannot keep a House or make one.

He is given up to fads, which grow like weeds about his old familiar plea for a duty on imported corn.

Mr Lowther for a time was Secretary for Ireland, and was the bogey-man who convinced the Duke of Marlborough that behind the viceregal chair of State stood certain sinister enemies of the State who aimed at sapping and undermining the foundations of the empire.

But Mr Lowther bears his troubles, like his age, lightly. No one walks with a more jaunty air than he. He is at all times breezy and débonnaire. But his *bête noir* at present is the peer, who, it is ruled, shall not take part in parliamentary elections yet figures in every one that occurs.

CHAPTER XLIX.

MR DILLON.

TIME has worked its will on Mr Dillon. He entered political life black of hair and olive in complexion. He is now white, and sallow each line in its place. Always tall and willowy, he is to-day taller and more willowy. Mr Dillon looks in these terrible times of the land war like the avenging genius of revolution. He says violent things with a shriek, and his thunder is rather the plaintive monotone of contemplative sadness.

Mr Healy called Mr Dillon a "melancholy humbug." Mr Dillon's views of Mr Healy would be interesting.

To-day, with unity stalking the earth like a satisfied Chadband, Mr Dillon narrowly escapes the calamity, in the eyes of national agitation, of being quite a "respectable-looking old gentleman." His latter-day mood may have been chastened by his having gradu-

ated in the "Patriot's College" and "seen the sky through prison bars."

He has been led to suspension and been suspended. No one has defied the Speaker's authority with more picturesque truculence. Dark and of brooding mien, he would stand behind folded arms and with brows beetling defiance of the terrorism of the chair.

His life may be likened to a violent epic written under extreme lights, Mr Dillon making himself his own hero.

CHAPTER L.

LORD JAMES OF HEREFORD.

I ALWAYS regard Lord James of Hereford as a most interesting and instructive gentleman.

It is impossible not to respect a man who at fifty learns to master a gun and go through a round of battues with the Heir-Apparent as his guest and not kill His Royal Highness. Yet it is a biographical fact that up to fifty Lord (then Sir Henry) James had never fired a shot.

The translation from the House of Commons to the House of Lords is always delightful, to him translated and to him who looks on. The people who try it never desire to try it backwards.

The experiment is to every man who makes it unique. The Chamber may be a place where, as some one said of Torquay, "wealth accumulates and men decay." Yet every one privileged to get there admits the Upper Chamber to be just a region of sweetness and light.

Into this illustrious branch of the Wise Sir Henry James betook him one day in a red tie and came out a peer, and with his red tie.

Lord James served the Queen in the Cabinet as Chancellor of the Duchy. But he knew nothing of country life, which earlier in his professional Radicalism caused him to sketch the Peerage as a political despotism, and to denounce it as a resort of feeble-minded autocrats.

Trained in the Inns of Court, all that he knew of battues and covert-shooting came out of the briefs from squabbling squires which as a successful Q.C. showered upon him.

The horse indeed had for Sir Henry James no other use than to draw a hansom cab or pull a brougham.

At fifty her Majesty's then Attorney-General learned to shoot, and as a peer he began to ride a cob.

Lord James is distinctly interesting. He is an extremely pleasant gentleman, but his face and traditions would foster faith rather in an austerity of manner. But the Prince likes him, and that explains the character of Lord James of Hereford.

He is fond of revisiting the lobbies of the House of Commons. Here he is invariably preoccupied. His daily companion on these incursions is a sheet of paper doubled horizontally. He carries it to the Peers' gallery, and is never seen without it in his

brougham. His red necktie, too, clings to him like the ribbon of some foreign order. Like Mr Labouchere's pocket Bible, it is always with him.

Like Sheridan, he "thinks out" and "polishes" his good things, and then at the right moment fires them off as *impropositus*.

So are table reputations made for grace and *aplomb*.

CHAPTER LI.

THE PARLIAMENTARY LAWYER.

MODESTY never carried a youthful aspirant over the ass's bridge of parliamentary competition ; modesty and the devil's own have always been to each other as strangers. This, as the attorney would say, is said without prejudice. A modest advocate would be, indeed, a rarity and an anachronism. He would not fit at all. If any man has ever been thus unhappily constituted, he and his profession, it is absolutely sure, got on badly.

When once a barrister moves ahead it is difficult to stop him. Take the memorable cases of Sir Richard Webster and Sir Edward Carson.

His greatest aid to success lies in his ungovernable self-esteem. He believes thoroughly in himself.

It must be said--and the saying of it suggests some curious reflections--that of all the struggling, ambitious, pushful members of the House of Commons, the lawyers get the most out of a political career. Why this should be the case is only explainable

upon the theory that their profession makes these gentlemen sturdy beggars. They are brought up to receive as well as to give blows.

A lawyer at the Bar or in the House can take a snub with a smile, or at least be nourished with the inward conviction that he will some day pay back the affront with abundance of interest.

A comfortable kind of smug audacity is the lawyer's.

Like the proverbial British army, he is capable of going to any lengths and doing anything. His chie is invincible. His energy is restless, inexhaustible. What to him is a small success would be to other politicians as a triumph.

In debate he speaks with the buoyant, cynical assurance of the Greek dancer who set the ballet agog with the complacent remark in simulated rage, "You all are wrong, I only am right."

The lawyer anywhere, in the House and out of it, is regarded with an instinctive dread. No one in the House cares to throw himself against a Q.C., because he expects to be worsted.

That experience really frequently proves the parliamentary attorney to be a greatly overrated potentiality goes absolutely for nothing.

Yet the parliamentary lawyer always comes in smiling. He regards a rebuff in an answer as "Of course, just like them."

Any point made against him in debate he meets with a look of would-be cruel disdain.

It is curious to observe that men of letters, with perhaps the single exception of Mr Lecky, have comparatively no status in the House of Commons. The newspaper proprietor is steadily gaining in numbers; but journalism, for instance, exercises absolutely no influence whatever. The fact that, in Byron's phrase, the newspaper editor may snuff out a man in a leading article passes for nothing in the House of Commons.

But about the lawyer's presence there is that undefinable sense of dangerous force which attends the able Q.C. on circuit, at the House, at the dinner-table, in the drawing-room, and even as he sits to be preached at by the pastor in the pulpit.

A noticeable feature about the parliamentary lawyer of to-day is the calm audacity with which he will, so to speak, pick and choose. It is an old truism of the stable that no man should look a gift horse in the mouth; but the parliamentary lawyer is afflicted with no such professional modesty towards the judicial offerings that may reach him—that is to say, if he is quite sure of his position.

The prizes of the House are few, but the prizes of the Bar are many. Many a man privately becomes M.P. that he may assist his ends as a lawyer.

Equally every lawyer who walks to the table to

take the oath and his seat may feel the Great Seal bobbing against his knees. Equally he may feel that he is now walking straight to the bench of the Lord Chief-Justice of England.

More modestly, there be lawyers who, abandoning the woolsack or the "full bottom" of the "Chief," look wistfully upon a recordership, and would even accept when one may be going that badge of petty tyranny and bourgeois remuneration, a county-court judgeship.

But every lawyer who enters the House of Commons expects something, and usually gets it.

To every barrister, therefore, Parliament has been for countless sessions the direct and readiest staircase to the bench.

The soldier has not such an advantage. He is not helped by the House. But the lawyer may easily use, and certainly does use, Parliament to promote his professional career.

The Parliament of 1895-1900 has been a golden time for the gentlemen of the long robe. Judges have been falling as thick as the leaves of Vallombrosa. Their places must be filled, and it is here that picking and choosing, already spoken of have come into such amusing play,

The patronage pot has boiled merrily.

The vacancies on the bench, in fact, came so rapidly that if Lord Salisbury were not constitutionally incap-

able of the levity he might have felt inclined to paraphrase the irreverent exclamation of Lord Melbourne, who is said to have met the newspaper announcement of a fresh see vacant with the cry, “D—n it, another bishop’s dead !”

It is an open secret that quite a battle royal was fought amongst the Q.C.’s of Liberal persuasion for the legal nuggets in the Government of 1892-95. Sir Edward Clarke, as all of us know, felt himself so strong that he declined to hold the office of Solicitor-General under the dispensation which detached private practice from the post. Sir Charles Russell—otherwise Lord Russell of Killowen—it is also a tradition of the Bar, declined to leave the Bar for the Bench unless as Lord Chief-Justice. So, truly, a remarkable man is the parliamentary lawyer.

In the bustling crowd, to have made their way in the House to the Bench or otherwise, there be Mr Richard Cross (now Lord Gross), Sir Hardinge Giffard (now Lord High Chancellor), Mr Henry Matthews (now Lord Llandaff), Sir Henry James (now Lord James of Hereford), Mr Grantham (now Justice Grantham), Mr Bingham, Mr Darling, Sir Richard Webster (later Master of the Rolls), and Sir E. Carson, knighted upon becoming Solicitor-General. There are many others who have been called, and there are many more still waiting in hot expectation of being called.

CHAPTER LII.

JOHN BURNS.

WE have all learned to like the hon. member for Battersea.

The greatest service John Burns has done the industrial population is in reconciling the House of Commons to the labour member. Until the advent of the hon. member for Battersea the labour M.P., was — well, not to be unkindly pointed or over precise — not popular. He was distrusted. His manners were studiously bad. He prided himself upon a certain truculence. He imagined the road to the attainment of his ends to be paved with coarse language. He bullied the House, which, beginning by listening with toleration, ended by departing in contempt.

Mr Thomas Burt was the first to see his way forward, but he was not lively. But Mr John Burns is lively.

Since the hoisting of that stodgy proclamation,

"The working man for the working classes," labour's force in Parliament had been reduced.

Mr Burns alone of his compatriots was the one gifted with originality.

To make an ideal labour member, take a brick of conceit, pound with a piquant sauce, liberally sprinkle with homely sayings, mix with a gallon of knowledge about everything in general, rub with plenty of courage, sugar with audacity, stir till firm, then label the mess, "Burns."

The member for Battersea is all these things.

He is strong, agile, a terrific worker, with lungs equal to a continent, and with a spirit which nothing can check. His sympathies are as broad as his chest.

He has a plain way of putting everything, is never dull, and bandies personalities with a delectable sweetness. But his personalities are always good-humoured.

It used to be said that Charles Bradlaugh "dearly loved a lord." The difference between Bradlaugh and Burns is that the "Lords dearly love Burns."

On one occasion he was moralising upon the men he had assisted.

"Some," he replied, "are dead, some are doing long terms, one was hanged, and a fourth is gibbering in a lunatic asylum."

The labour member, John Burns, is fond of saying you must not do two things.

"He must not dress like a waiter or spell like a duke."

This too, "The Sergeant-at-Arms is the parliamentary double of the Grand Lama of Tibet."

Burns skates, swims, boxes, rides a bike, and plays crickets. He never drinks alcohol, and is not a smoker. He is self-educated, has a good library, and finds much pleasure in work, which to him is never ending.

CHAPTER LIII.

THE FIRST PARLIAMENT OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.

THIS book goes to press as the thunder of the general election which has given us the first Parliament of the twentieth century is slowly fading into the silence of distance.

The approach of a general election is invariably met by a wail of despair. It is the despair of the pessimists. Parliament, we are gravely told, is not as it was, and has become little more than a glorified vestry, and haply not as interesting as one of the new county councils.

Yet this latter-day habit of looking back and robbing the present to enrich the past has one odd feature. It is a form of progressive despair which, to be appreciated, must be read backwards. For to the masters of style, every Parliament has been worse than its predecessor.

Well, it must be said that 'the House of Commons has taken its decay very philosophically, and, if we

are to judge by the logic of comparatives, has even thrived in its decay. For be it observed that as long ago as the age of Fox, the House of Commons was written of as a place of little importance and of decay.

Charles James Fox, writing to the son of Sir Charles Grey, who had just accepted a peerage, said, "I am very much concerned to hear of your father's peerage, more especially as I understand it vexes you very much. It is undoubtedly a provoking event; but, according to my notions, the constitution of the country is declining so rapidly that the House of Commons has in a great measure ceased, and will entirely cease, to be a place of much importance."

So wrote Fox, and so writes the parliamentary pessimist. Yet between the Parliament of which Fox wrote and the Parliament which recently went to its doom amid the despairing jeremiads of those who saw no hope for its successor, no promise for the future, old and noble figures passing away, and no rising men of promise to take their place, we have a good century of gloomy vaticination.

It seems, therefore, that the despair of to-day is answered by the groans of the distant past. And just as Fox's prophecy of the House of Commons becoming a place of little importance has been frustrated in its confirmation by the rising of successive Parliaments which have ennobled our history, so are the gloomy forebodings of the Fox of to-day answered in their turn.

So long as parliamentary government exists in this country, there will assuredly rise men equal to the maintenance of its finest traditions. We have to-day as young men of the highest promise Lord Curzon of Kedleston, destined for a great political career, Mr George Wyndham, and Sir Edward Grey, Lord Hugh Cecil, Earl Percy, Mr Herbert Gladstone; and we have, as a reserve of older parliamentary hands in the very prime of life, the Earl of Rosebery, Mr John Morley, Mr Asquith, Mr Brodrick, and Mr Hanbury. Do these men count for nothing?

So much for the Parliament of the fading century; and now to some of the elections out of which it has risen by progressive stages.

It is not difficult to find in public life to-day men who sigh for the age of the hustings and the rough life of electioneering thirty and forty years ago, before vote by ballot and statute-made purity. The other day, at a club in London, a possible candidate for an English county asked this question :—

“Is it worth spending £1000 upon a defeat, merely to get one’s foot down?”

“Undoubtedly; and cheap at the money,” replied a venerable knight, a member of the House. “What’s £1000 to £15,000? It cost me that sum to be defeated, and I got a cracked skull to boot.”

The cost of it is now just the pinch of it. But

men from time immemorial have revelled in the most expensive luxury of any English epoch. For there is nothing so costly as electioneering known to history. Men have ruined their posterity to reach the House of Commons, and to-day the only objection to a canvass on the part of the man of wealth is that he cannot secure a better canter by a larger expenditure of money.

Such be the pleasure and the sport of riches.

The new M.P. will not be in a position to analyse the quality of the new House. He cannot exactly judge of himself as a standard of excellence. A little later and he will do this with impartial complacency.

In the meantime he will find about him crowds of very able men, and crowds of very—well, very mediocre men.

Young men of promise in the past Parliament have been rewarded in this: others are destined to come on, and be heard from, and win renown and reward later.

Of the vanished figures it is unnecessary to say much. Mr Courtney represents the failure of political life from an inability to be steadfast to one political ideal or party. Sir Henry Howorth is another to have suffered from “candid friendships”; Sir Henry M. Stanley has retired from a life which he took up merely to finish a notable career.

These men, their past, their parliamentary opportunities, and the use which they made of them,

may prove as lessons, as morals, or as finger-posts to the new M.P.'s permitted to shape, or assist in shaping, the destinies of the Twentieth Century.

With the election of the new Parliament Lord Lansdowne became Foreign Secretary, Mr Brodrick Secretary for War, Lord Selborne First Lord of the Admiralty, Mr George Wyndham Secretary for Ireland, Mr Ritchie Home Secretary, Mr Gerald Balfour President of the Board of Trade, Mr Austen Chamberlain Secretary to the Treasury, as the open door to the Cabinet, and Mr Hanbury — presumably because he knows nothing of rural life — President of the Board of Agriculture.

Mr Goschen retired himself out of House and office, no one knew why, while all the political world had its suspicions.

Mr Chaplin was “reconstructed” out of the Ministry, and now sits in Mr Courtney’s old corner.

Sir Matthew White Ridley, also “reconstructed” out of office, has, with Mr Goschen, found a sanctuary in the House of Peers, sitting near Lord Cross, “reconstructed.”

Mr T. W. Russell revolted. He, with Mr Powell Williams, out of the amber, no one knowing how or why, and Mr Macartney, replaced by Mr Arnold Forster as Secretary to the Admiralty, has become a gentleman of leisure warmed by a secret internal lime-kiln of a grievance.

CHAPTER LIV.

CONCLUSION.

I HAVE carried the new member round the parliamentary clock, and shown him some of the realities and romance of legislation and politics.

Practically anything under the Crown is open to a member of the House of Commons who possesses ability, can speak to the advantage of his party, may become a terror to the forces opposite, or who, lacking these things, makes himself so unpleasant on his own side that his chiefs are glad to send him abroad for his country's good or their own relief.

The Viceroyship of India itself is within easy reach of an ordinary M.P. Governorships, colonial and military, are at his feet. Posts in the Civil Service may be his if he wants any. There is an easy road given, the conditions complied with, to the Treasury Bench.

To the man who likes parliamentary life for itself the House is the most delightful resort in the country, perhaps in the world.

The M.P. is a person of distinction, go he abroad by land or water.

A poor man he has the refusal of the best that only a rich unknown can obtain by paying for.

If he be a successful broker on the Stock Exchange —and the number of the tribe of Israel is increasing —he may have half the peers at his feet, and their wives too.

Personally I would close Parliament to stockbrokers as it is closed to the clergy, but for a different reason.

The House is full financially of men who would, and they do.

Excellent marriages are made through the Terrace.

All a young M.P. has to do is to abjure strong drinks, dress well, show good taste in flowers, be velvety, drop in a telling question “arising out of” when his ladies are within hearing, and always secure a good table on the Terrace for t^a, be able to tell his American friends the name of e^{ry} society woman, and not forget the scandal attaching to each, if any.

The greybeards’ politics be heavy and historic.

But the whole outcome of the House of Commons, regarded seriously, is that the work of this country is in the hands of a dozen men, and its legislation is guided by about twenty-four others.

The House has a strong social side, as I have endeavoured to show. This is its popular, winning side.

Its period of serious business is confined to the pre-Easter interval. Between Easter and Whitsuntide it steadily abandons itself to pleasure.

Between Whitsuntide or June and prorogation the Government have taken "all the time of the House," and private legislation being hopeless, private legislators, excepting an immaterial minority, give themselves over to the delights which are now fast, if not furious.

The immaterial minority take an unpoetical revenge for the loss of their own bills by resisting those of Ministers.

But even here the survival of the fighter is feeble and uncertain.

What has helped to divorce the House of Commons from its old historical character is the fading of the old party lines.

Parties are now mixed. They are no longer sharply defined, excepting, perhaps, the Nationalists, who, however, live to prey alternately upon the Liberals and the Unionists.

The Nationalists are a force of modern growth. They are part of the phenomena of the new House of Commons.

Many of the latter-day watchwords of the Tories are to-day the old watchwords of the Liberals.

A Liberal Opposition no longer opposes after the old fashion.

A Unionist Opposition has lost zest for the tiring work of resistance.

It is entirely a novel condition of things.

A new House of Commons has grown up.

The old austerity of legislation has all but vanished.

Legislation is now very largely an arrangement come to between the two front benches.

Grand Committee—another modern invention—relieves the House proper of a great deal of the light labour which it now calls work.

Grand Committee is the safety-valve of the old order of M.P.'s—the reformers, the men of "isms," the faddists—a steadily diminishing parliamentary race.

Men earnest to obtain advertisement, which through the absence of the old-time debates is no longer afforded in the old-fashioned form, now give themselves up to asking questions.

The questions are upon the increase. They are the last hope of a despairing class.

A question will be reported where a speech will not.

So with the best intentions in the world, the working M.P. finds himself taking his duties lightly until he falls under the inevitable, inexorable influence of the euthanasia of modern parliamentary life.

But while the predominant class which made up the old House of Commons has lost its former force

in the new House of Commons, the change has not impaired either the dignity or the patriotism of Parliament.

The Parliament which, however, starts the new century is destined to see further changes.

These will come when the day dawns upon that Imperial Federated Parliament to which Home and Colonial aspirations are certainly tending.

THE END.

